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Critical Reflections on Rap Music in Contemporary Morocco: Urban Youth Culture Between and Beyond State's Co-optation and Dissent

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Thesis submitted for the degree of PhD

2014

Centre for Cultural, Literary and Postcolonial Studies (CCLPS)
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Abstract

This thesis delves into the Moroccan rap scene and contemporary Morocco's social, political and economic context to examine the role of the state headed by the Makhzen (the Moroccan ruling elites) as main patrons of the arts in its attempt to use rap as a tool for social control. This project explores how, by promoting a 'modern' and liberal image of the country through patronage of selective rappers, the country's elites have honed a particular vision of the nation. It also looks at how other civil society groups have capitalized on rap to fulfill their own political agendas. Though forces conspired to silence certain rappers, voices of dissent that oppose dominant narratives have also emerged. Moreover, this thesis reflects on the different signifiers used to gain an audience and popular support, and the relation of rappers with urban unprivileged youth and their feelings of exclusion. It goes on to provide a nuanced analysis of rappers use of language, urban spaces, national and international music genres. In its analysis, this thesis unravels the Moroccan rap scene both as a music production at the intersection of national and local cultural politics, as well as one influenced by global cultural flows. It also examines how rappers reimagine national identity and the politics of patriotic rap songs. By presenting the complexities of the rap scene, this thesis aims at challenging the representation of youth cultural production in the MENA (Middle East and North Africa) region and Africa as simply a 'protest' culture. It looks beyond the binary where music is understood either as co-opted or dissenting and explores the politics of artistic creativity and music aesthetics. Analysis is supported by two years of fieldwork that expands on the dominant perception of rap music and youth in Morocco, the MENA region and Africa.

Table of Content

List of Figures	6
Acknowledgments.....	7
Introduction: Moroccan Rap in Context	10
<i>Marginalized Moroccan Urban Youth.....</i>	<i>16</i>
<i>The Politics of Hip Hop Culture and Rap Music.....</i>	<i>20</i>
<i>Challenges in the Study of Youth Cultural Production in the MENA Region.....</i>	<i>32</i>
<i>Methods and Methodology</i>	<i>43</i>
<i>Thesis structure.....</i>	<i>55</i>
Chapter One: National Identity and Rap Music	59
1. <i>(De)Constructing the Nation.....</i>	<i>62</i>
2. <i>Shaping National Popular Music.....</i>	<i>75</i>
3. <i>The Aesthetics Politics of Taqlidi Rap.....</i>	<i>87</i>
4. <i>Moroccanness and Global Flows.....</i>	<i>95</i>
<i>Conclusion.....</i>	<i>107</i>
Chapter Two: Language, Urban Spaces and Cultural Resistance	109
1. <i>The Politics of Language in the Cultural Field</i>	<i>112</i>
2. <i>Urban Youth Language: Street Darija vs. Refined Rap.....</i>	<i>121</i>
3. <i>Co-opting Resistance.....</i>	<i>132</i>
4. <i>Strategies of Cultural Control.....</i>	<i>143</i>
5. <i>Casablanca and Cultural Struggle.....</i>	<i>156</i>
<i>Conclusion.....</i>	<i>168</i>
Chapter Three: Branding Patriotic Rap	170
1. <i>Genesis of Patriotic Rap.....</i>	<i>172</i>

2. <i>Endorsing the Moroccan 'Exception'</i>	186
3. <i>Critical Response to Patriotic Narratives in Rap</i>	200
4. <i>Serving Power: Fighting the Makhzen's Enemy</i>	208
<i>Conclusion</i>	224
Chapter Four: Framing Voices of Dissent	227
1. <i>Rap and The Nayda Narrative</i>	230
2. <i>'Resistance' in Context</i>	237
3. <i>Silencing Voices of Dissent</i>	255
4. <i>Engaging with the Unprivileged Urban</i>	269
<i>Conclusion</i>	280
Chapter Five: Artistic Creativity, Marginality and Cultural Clichés	282
1. <i>Marketing Moroccan Rappers</i>	285
2. <i>Locating Cultural Clichés</i>	295
3. <i>'Blackness' and Urban Youth</i>	309
4. <i>Global Culture and The Empowerment of Local Marginalities</i>	327
<i>Conclusion</i>	337
Conclusion	339
Bibliography	345
<i>Songs</i>	380
<i>Albums</i>	383

List of Figures

Figure 1. Map of Morocco	9
Figure 2. Book covers featuring hip hop culture	35
Figure 3. Snapshot of video clip "Checkmate" (2011) by Mobydick	125
Figure 4. Snapshot of video clip "Lmoutchoukistan" (2011) by Mobydick	125
Figure 5. Cartoon presenting Don Bigg as a co-opted rapper	134
Figure 6. Cover image of DBF Studios	139
Figure 7. Cartoon criticizing Festival <i>Mawazine</i>	148
Figure 8. Poster of the event <i>Machri9 al Anwar</i> (2013) in Casablanca	161
Figure 9. Poster of Festival <i>L'Boulevard</i> 2013	163
Figure 10. Section of <i>L'Boulevard</i> 2013 Poster "Butcher Palestine"	165
Figure 11. Section of <i>L'Boulevard</i> 2013 Poster "Daniel Nursery School"	166
Figure 12. <i>Khamsa</i> in video clip "Matkich Bladi" (2004)	181
Figure 13. Logo of the Association Matkich Bladi	182
Figure 14. Snapshot of video clip "Yed El Henna" (2007)	192
Figure 15. Snapshot of video clip "Maghreb 1 Machi 2" (2011)	211
Figure 16. H-Kayne and M-Snoop with Moroccan flag in "Maghreb 1 Machi 2" (2011)	212
Figure 17. Cover of Album <i>Yed el Henna</i> (2007)	212
Figure 18. Video clip "A la Marocaine" (2011)	213
Figure 19. Title of the song "A la Marocaine" (2011)	223
Figure 20. Snapshot of video clip "Mabghitch" (2011)	242
Figure 21. Muslim and Don Bigg meme on Facebook in 2013	270
Figure 22. Chat Man's name on woman's leg	301
Figure 23. Snapshot of the video clip "F.U" (2012)	303
Figure 24. Cover of the magazine <i>MarocHebdo</i>	315
Figure 25. Wall in Mobydick's Adghal Records Studios in Salé (2013)	331
Figure 26. Mobydick and Dizzy DROS at Adghal Records Studios in Salé (2013)	332

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Figure 1. Map of Morocco

Introduction: Moroccan Rap in Context

Morocco is located both geographically and culturally in North Africa, between Europe, the Middle East, and the American continent. This location makes it a particularly unique context in which to explore a diverse range of social, political, historical, and artistic events (Laachir 2013a, p.257). This idea of uniqueness feeds from the image that Morocco employs to showcase itself as an exceptional country within the region and thus marketed as a moderate country in process of democratization under the leadership and guidance of the monarchy (Maghraoui 2011, p.681; Bouasria 2013, p.37).¹ As a postcolonial nation, Morocco has been dominated by the absolute power of the monarchy sustained by the state headed by the Makhzen, a socio-political entity that emerged in the twelfth century after the separation of the Moroccan sultans from Abbasid rule in Bagdad (Daadaoui 2011, p.42). The Makhzen was responsible for gathering the taxes (religious taxes, money reserves, arms and ammunitions) and sending them to the treasury of the *umma* (the Islamic community) (Ibid). Over time, the Makhzen went from being officials in charge of the government's treasury, to a group that accumulated a great deal of power (Ibid). The areas controlled by the Sultan during the precolonial period until 1912² were referred to as *bled al makhzen*, while, the rebellious regions, mainly inhabited by Amazigh tribes, the indigenous inhabitants of North Africa, were the *bled es siba* (Sater 2010, p.3; Daadaoui 2011, p.45). The period of the French and

¹ The Moroccan 'exception' refers to the official narrative whereby Morocco is globally marketed as a religiously moderate country absent of religious terrorism guided by a monarchy in charge of warranting the country's future pushing for democracy and political stability (Maghraoui 2011, p.681; Bouasria 2013, p.37). The narrative of the Moroccan 'exception' is further discussed in the section "Endorsing the Moroccan 'Exception'" in Chapter Three of this thesis.

² In 1912, the Sultan signed the Treaty of Fes by which Morocco became a French protectorate. Later that year, the French and the Spanish signed an agreement whereby Spain would take control of the northern region including the Rif Mountains.

Spanish rule in Morocco (1912-1956) unified the pre-colonial divisions between the *bled es siba* and the *bled al makhzen*, and in the process strengthened the authority of the Makhzen, thus helping to construct what would become postcolonial Morocco (Daadaoui 2011, p.46, 54). Today, the term Makhzen is used in Morocco to refer to the state, and alludes to a central authority, as well as its political and economic ruling elites, which provide the country's administrative structure, legal framework and military manpower to increase the Moroccan Monarchy's authority (Maghraoui 2001, p.12; Sater 2010, p.3; Daadaoui 2011, p.46). The institution of the Makhzen absorbs and deflects direct criticism from the king, allowing him to be presented as 'independent' of the state and thus increasing his authority. As Rahma Bourqia (1999, p.244) claims, although the media often employs the word *dawla* (state) to refer to the state, the word Makhzen is still used by people in everyday language as part of the Moroccan lexicon to refer to power. The Makhzen is also a powerful voice in articulating, both internally and internationally, the narrative of change and to portraying Morocco as a 'modern' country in the road to democracy (Laachir 2013b, p.45). This constant narrative of economic and political reforms has ensured the monarchy's hegemonic position within Morocco's complex political and economic systems (Joffé 2009, pp.151–152).

Reforms began at the beginning of the 1980s with the transformation of postcolonial Morocco into a neoliberal state. The French rule had shifted power from interior cities of Fez and Marrakech to the coastal area by making Rabat the administrative capital and Casablanca the economic capital. This shift stimulated an intense human rural-urban migration that together with rapid population growth (from 12 million to 31 million people between 1961 and 2003) and a governmental

program of privatization foregrounded what became Morocco's contemporary economic problems (Joffé 2009, p.158). Uprisings broke in Moroccan urban centers in 1981 after the government announced the rise of food prices caused by a soaring economic crisis (Paul 1981, pp.30–31). In September 1983, the Moroccan government resorted to the International Monetary Fund as a result of its rise in foreign debt. The program of privatization began the same year, and affected the already high unemployment rates in the country, particularly in urban areas (Sater 2010, p.98). By the end of the 1980s, King Hassan II expressed his desire to privatize all public companies, an aim that was realized in 1989 law. At the beginning of the 1990s, the European Union promoted the same sort of privatization policy in the region, as Joffé (2009, pp.159-160) explains, via neoliberal economic reforms in the MENA region as part of a strategy to counter economic migration into Europe by stimulating domestic employment. Concealed by the language of free market, these neoliberal reforms conveyed new forms of patronage and exploitation “in which the state apparatus changed its modes of intervention but still played a crucial role” (Bogaert 2013, p.223). Privatization in Morocco implied that the kings, Hassan II and later Mohammed VI, became the country's most significant businessmen because it was they who owned the majority of shares in ONA (Omnium Nord Africaine), the most important private holding in the country (Sater 2010, p.103).

The 1990s brought social and political reforms with two constitutional revisions, in 1992 and 1996, and a slight liberalization of the press (Willis 2009, pp.230–231). The preamble of the 1992 constitution declared Morocco's respect for human rights as universally recognized (Sater 2010, p.61). It also set the grounds for implementation of the *alternance*, which came in during the 1996 constitutional

reform by relegating everyday politics to the prime minister and political parties (Ibid, p.63). *Alternance* meant that after the 1996 constitution the power had to be alternated between the two major political coalitions of the central-right and central-left (Laachir 2013b, p.46). However, control over the ministries of the interior, foreign affairs, justice and Islamic affairs remained in the hands of the king. King Hassan II's commitment to *alternance* helped the monarchy shape Morocco's political landscape as a 'truly' parliamentary democracy (Storm 2007, p.120). Although the government of *alternance* brought hope for political liberalization, in reality, political pluralism strengthened the role of the king as the supreme arbiter (Maghraoui 2011, p.683). In this sense, Morocco's monarchy has proven to be extremely flexible in ensuring its survival while maintaining absolute power (Joffé 2009, p.152).

With the enthronement of the new King Mohammed VI in 1999, political and social reforms continued alongside the narrative of democratization and change (Laachir 2013b, p.46). One important long-demanded reform was the implementation of a new Family Code or *Moudawwana* approved in 2004. The new code has improved the legal status of Moroccan women, but did not completely fulfill the demands of feminist groups. In particular, complaints surrounded the failure of family judges to apply the laws. Moreover, women, especially in rural areas, remain largely unaware of their legal rights under the new laws (Ibid, p.47). This reform is also perceived as part of King Mohammed VI aim to capitalization on women's 'rights' to promote the country in tune with Western concepts of

‘democracy’ and ‘modernity’³ (Kozma 2003, p.127; Sater 2010, p.81). However, the passing of this law and the liberalization under the new king marked a rupture with Hassan II’s authoritarian rule, a rupture that was even more apparent in the establishment of the Equity and Reconciliation Commission (IER) in 2004. The new committee was in charge of investigating four decades of disappearances, arbitrary detentions, and cases of torture starting from the country’s independence to 1999. The IER, despite its flaws, was a rather unique initiative not only within Morocco, but also in the Arabic-speaking region (Kausch 2009, p.167; Laachir 2013b, p.46). More changes occurred during the first years of the reign of Mohammed VI, including the inauguration of the Royal Institute of Amazigh Culture (IRCAM) in 2002, which was intended to promote Amazigh identity in Morocco, as a way of counteracting the postcolonial neglect of the group. These new projects were meant to project the image of a reformer on Mohammed VI (Linn 2011, p.5; Errihani 2013, p.57). It is in this same vein that the National Development Initiative (INDH) can be seen, a program that took off in 2005 to fight poverty and exclusion. The program helped shape Mohammed VI’s image as the ‘king of the poor’ and handicapped (Bouasria 2013, p.38).

With the pass of time, however, the liberalization of authoritarian rule has confirmed that this road does not necessarily lead to democracy (Boukhars 2011, p.5). Despite their number and scope, these economic, social and political reforms have been merely a cosmetic⁴ strategy to ensure the survival and indeed the

³ See *Islam in Liberalism* (2015) by Joseph Massad for a comprehensive study on the construction of ‘democracy’, ‘modernity’ and women ‘rights’ as part of the narrative of European liberalism.

⁴ Lisa Storm defines cosmetic changes as those that “are either not substantial or focus on areas of the constitution that are of minor importance to the development of democracy” (2007, p.195). In this

sovereignty of the monarchy (Laachir 2013b, p.44). Implementing cosmetic reforms allowed the monarchy to successfully navigate the rough waters of the MENA region's uprisings in 2010-2011. At this time, the region experienced a series of popular uprisings distinguished by their pro-democracy movements, which rapidly emerged in the different countries where it took hold. The long decades of oppressive, tyrannical, and authoritarian rule of the postcolonial MENA countries were threatened by a unique people's call for change (Laachir 2013b, p.43). Morocco's first demonstrations were limited and took place in solidarity with the Tunisian and Egyptian uprisings (F ernandez Molina 2011, p.436). Soon, however, and mainly through new forms of social media such as Facebook and YouTube, the demands for internal political changes were gathered in a call for national mobilization on February 20, 2011. The demands voiced by the people organizing and participating in the protests included denouncing social-economic injustice in the country, as well as the systemic oppression, corruption in the country. The February 20 demonstrations, which engendered the 20 February Movement (M20F), however, differentiated their demands from the rest of the region in not questioning Morocco's monarchic system of rule or King Mohammed VI position as leader. The M20F posed nevertheless a threat to the hegemonic power of the king with their continuous demonstrations during 2011. These proved successful when on March 9, 2011, the king announced constitutional reforms including an increase in the prime minister power's, an independent judiciary, an increase in individual and collective liberties, and the recognition of Amazigh as an official language. Despite these promises, the process for constitutional reform demonstrated to be all but inclusive of diverse

sense, the amendments to the constitution of 1970, 1972, 1980, 1992 and 1996 can be described as cosmetic (Ibid).

social and political organizations (F ernandez Molina 2011, p.439). Protestors of the M20F openly manifested the new 2011 constitution weakness towards democratic changes by boycotting the referendum in July 1 and continuing the demonstrations (Maghraoui 2011, p.690). However, the Makhzen succeeded in framing this constitutional reform as part of Morocco’s ‘exceptionalism’ in the region, and as proof that it was a moderate and liberal country.

Marginalized Moroccan Urban Youth

The cosmetic character of years of social, economic and political reforms had – perhaps predictably—not had any effect, as the country continues to suffer from high rates of poverty, unemployment, and illiteracy (Cohen & Jaidi 2006, p.xvi). Removing the state from the economic process in particular was inefficient in reducing unemployment or poverty rates (Cohen & Jaidi 2006, p.38; Joff  2009, p.160; Bahmad 2013, p.17). Cohen & Jaidi (2006, p.39) set at 5.3 million the number of individuals living in poverty out of a total population of over 30 million people. Neoliberal economic changes put through in the 80s and 90s have not had any positive effect on rural areas that employ almost half of the labor sector (Sater 2010, p.107). In fact, although privatization has encouraged the emergence of an entrepreneurial class, economic prosperity is limited to the economic elites and concentrated in the economic capital of Casablanca (Ibid, p.106-107). The industrialization of the urban milieus has created new middle classes (Leveau 1997, p.106). Yet, there is still a significant gap between elites or upper classes and the unprivileged majority of the country’s population.

This gap is highlighted in the fact that illiteracy remains one of the main social problems in Morocco; according to UNICEF and the World Bank, the literacy rates (meaning the people who can, with understanding, read and write a short, simple statement on their everyday life) for those over 15 years old is 67%.⁵ Yet, these statistics overlook the great difference between schooling in urban and rural areas or the gender gap in literacy (Boutieri 2012, p.444). Illiteracy has been also used by the elites as an obstacle for democracy and therefore divesting the responsibility for lack of change from the monarchy (Maghraoui 2001, p.17; Maghraoui 2011, p.681).

Widespread illiteracy rates and the social and economic problems that affect youth, particularly education as well as unemployment and housing, have been high jacked by the Makhzen as part of the official discourse (Bourqia 1999, p.251). In supporting youth's struggles as part of the Makhzen's official discourse, the elites are able to neutralize the attacks of oppositional groups on the country's social malaises. The Makhzen can thus be seen to co-opt young people's cries of exclusion and despair, positioning them in the front row of the country's concerns (Ibid). Despite the fact that King Mohammed VI is considered an advocate of youth integration into society (Hegasy 2007, p.31; Laachir 2013b, p.45), the bulk of Morocco's population (30% aged from 15 to 29)⁶ still feels marginalized from the rest of society. Poverty and unemployment affects a large percentage of urban youth, with 30% of those educated past the primary level unemployed (Cohen & Jaidi 2006,

⁵ http://www.unicef.org/infobycountry/morocco_statistics.html [Accessed August 5, 2014]; <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SE.ADT.LITR.ZS> [Accessed August 5, 2014].

⁶ http://www-wds.worldbank.org/external/default/WDSContentServer/WDSP/IB/2012/08/13/000333037_20120813235720/Rendered/PDF/687310REVISED00029020120Box369250B.pdf [Accessed August 5, 2014].

p.39). A 2012 report from the World Bank argues that youth have been largely marginalized from the country's economic growth in the last decade.⁷ As the report claims, the high level of unemployment, however, only partially explains the exclusion of Moroccan youth from economic life. In this sense, gender disparities, lack of education, and a failure of governmental programs aiding job searches and placement have increased this exclusion. Feelings of failure and distress are increased by the fact that young men in particular are expected to become breadwinners and take care of their future families. According to the Human Development Report commissioned by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), despite the fact that young people in Morocco constitute the largest part of population, politicians have failed to integrate youth within society. The report emphasizes the number of disenchanted responses among the youth over their future in Morocco (2005, p.11). With regard to the Makhzen's concern with youth, these grievances may easily turn young people into a social pressure cooker and become a threat to the monarchy's hegemony.

Feelings of exclusion, particularly among the underprivileged, belong to Moroccan youth as social group and not merely because of a biological age. This thesis refers to youth rather as a social group with diverse meaning that develops over time and space (Nayak 2003, p.3). As a social group, youth are a social construction that presents as a phase between childhood and adulthood (Simonsen 2005, p.7; Herrera & Bayat 2010, p.6). Therefore, this thesis considers youth as a heterogeneous group differentiated by gender, income, cultural background, and/or religious belief. In this sense, it looks at youth as a habitus, as suggested by Asef

⁷ Ibid.

Bayat & Martijn de Koning (2005, p.60) and Linda Herrera & Asef Bayat (2010, p.6), in which young people are part of everyday practices of cultural politics, shaping their social and cultural spaces, rebelling or innovating, as well as worrying about their future life as adults. In this sense, youth is a group whose aim is to defend and extend “the conditions that allow[] the young to assert their individuality, creativity, and lightness and free them from anxiety over the prospect of their future” (Bayat 2010, p.18). Furthermore, youth here remains a meaningful analytical group as young people themselves create it, however, alongside with the state. In this sense, youth as a heterogeneous social group is also conceived as marginal in respect to adulthood, which is often perceived by youth as the dominant social group. As Osumare argues, “youth itself is a marginal status representing a discursive construction of a large segment of any society’s population often in tension with the adult ruling authorities” (2007, pp.71–72). Youth exclusion in Morocco is aggravated by the fact that young people do not rely on the power of the political system to effectively make a difference as political parties are generally discredited and perceived as weak (Cavatorta 2006, p.208; Cohen & Jaidi 2006, p.72).

This thesis methodologically examines youth as a social group in order to understand the ways youth negotiate, speak, reflect and construct their interests and values (Bloustien & Peters 2011, p.12). As a group, I argue with Bayat (2010, p.18) that youth forge collective identities in schools, colleges, urban public spaces, and the virtual world. Social and everyday experiences, such as shared meeting places in Casablanca like Rachidi Square (renamed Nevada by the city’s youth), as well as cues of fashion, and language, determine belonging to this social group, as opposed to economic or social status. Nevertheless, this thesis specifically reflects on the

unprivileged situation of a large segment of Moroccan urban youth, who suffer high rates of unemployment and poverty. Unprivileged refers to the urban population affected by the processes of liberalization in Morocco during the 1980 and 1990s that were associated with the introduction of a neo-liberal market economy (Maghraoui 2011, p.687; Bahmad 2014, p.378).

The Politics of Hip Hop Culture and Rap Music

In Morocco, it is within urban spaces and the culture produced there including rap music that epitomize the social disparities between an established urban bourgeoisie and the county's elites, and the impoverished youth (Bennani-Chraïbi & Jeghlal 2012, p.868; Bahmad 2013, pp.18–19; Bahmad 2014, p.378). As it is used here, the term hip hop⁸ refers to the numerous cultural expressions which include MCing⁹ (rapping), DJing, graffiti art, breakdancing, as well as other diverse forms of street dance including street talk and knowledge, fashion, and politics (Perullo 2005, p.95; Alim 2009, p.2). The term hip hop thus makes reference to a variety of concepts and practices and to a particular culture, though it is often also employed interchangeably as a synonym of rap music.¹⁰ Hip hop's importance as a form of urban popular culture is located in its capacity to narrate the untold stories of the Moroccan urban unprivileged youth.

In *Domination and the Arts of Resistance*, James Scott unravels the dynamics of cultural and political domination by exploring the power relations between

⁸ The spelling of "hip hop" is varied and can be found as Hip Hop, hip-hop, Hiphop. I follow Tricia Rose (1994; 2008), S. Craig Watkins (2005), Halifu Osumare (2007), Anthony Kwame Harrison (2009) amongst others in their spelling "hip hop."

⁹ MC stands for Master of Ceremony and is used as a synonym to rapper.

¹⁰ The magazine *Unesco Courier*, a publication, dedicates a dossier to two popular music genres, one of which it refers to as hip hop music (2000, p.21). The researcher of the publication, Alex Perullo (2005, p.96), also alludes to "hip-hop songs" as employing the terms hip hop and rap interchangeably.

dominant groups and those resisting them, referring respectively to “public” and “hidden transcripts” (1990, p.xii). Scott claims that subordinate groups create “hidden transcripts” to criticize power behind the back of dominant groups (Ibid). Hidden transcripts are thus disguised within everyday lives as coded messages that challenge or reshape dominant narratives. These hidden transcripts characterize the discourses that take place “offstage” far from the site of power (Ibid, p.4). Public transcripts, on the other hand, refer to the open interaction between power and its subordinates (Ibid, p.2). However, Scott asserts that subversive messages are often expressed openly, albeit in a disguised form, making it possible to interpret jokes, songs, tales, and rumors as ways of denouncing power (Ibid, p.xiii).

Studies on popular music, such as *Dangerous Crossroads* (1994) by George Lipsitz, Nimrod Baranovitch’s *China’s New Voices* (2003), Nooshin Laudan’s introduction to the edited volume *Music and the Play of Power in the Middle East, North Africa and Central Asia* (2009) and Natalia Lozano’s *Playing Music, Performing Resistance* (2012), have drawn on Scott’s framework to highlight the power of music to convey messages of dissent. The idiosyncrasy of music allows it to express hidden and subversive messages into a more public forum and allows people to engage and react to them (Allen 2004, pp.5–6). Tricia Rose, in her seminal work on US rap, *Black Noise* (1994), framed rap music as a hidden transcript. Rose argues that rap music is in many ways (although not always) a hidden transcript in its use of masked speech and cultural codes, which are used to remark and/or challenge power inequalities (1994, p.100). Specifically, she argues that rap music is engaged symbolically and ideologically in a fight against institutions and groups that oppress African Americans (Ibid, p.101). However, as Rose suggests, considering our

contemporary context where cultural production is mass-mediated and mass-distributed, “rap’s resistive transcripts are articulated and acted out in both hidden and public domains, making them highly visible, yet difficult to contain and confine” (Ibid). In other words, rap is especially significant because of the genre’s central position in mass-mediated popular culture; at the same time as it voices social critique and criticism. The ability of rap to articulate voices of dissent is behind the famous US rapper Chuck D’s description of rap as the “CNN of Black People,” a phrase that symbolically presents the music genre as the voice of the excluded youth (Chang 2000, p.31). Due to rap’s connection with social struggle and criticism, it is often framed as a rebellious art form, or as Halifu Osumare puts it: “an in-your-face rebellious youth style that challenges class inequities wherever it expresses itself on the globe” (2007, p.71). Rap have also imposed a particular reading on this music often highlighting issues of ‘race,’¹¹ poverty, oppression, feelings of despair and social exclusion (Rose 1994, p.3; Osumare 2007, p.33; Terkourafi 2010, p.2).

As a starting point, this thesis considers cultural expressions used consciously or not to oppose dominant political, economic and social narratives to be acts of “cultural resistance” (Duncombe 2002, p.5). Therefore, it considers that in contesting dominant narratives, resistance engages with power following and contesting “the lines of inclusion and exclusion that are integral to all systems of power” (Tripp 2013, p.4). Chapters Two, Four and Five this thesis will delve specially on discussing how ‘resistance’ is constituted, framed and presented in the light of the diverse and complex meanings it assumes in respect to the Moroccan rap scene. In particular, in discussing ‘resistance’ and ‘dissent,’ this thesis critically deconstructs

¹¹ This thesis follows Nikki Sullivan in considering ‘race’ as “an unstable and shifting fantasy” (2003, p.65), that is, a dominant cultural narrative that cannot be explained in biological terms.

the romantization of cultures of opposition as discussed by Lila Abu-Lughod (1990). Therefore, the notions of ‘resistance’ and ‘dissent’ in relation to Moroccan rap music constructed by different cultural stakeholders, institutions and media outlets are critically examined and challenged. In this vein, this thesis does not aim to offer a clear-cut once and for all definition of these terms but examine the agendas behind framing rappers and rap music within these terms. It therefore considers rap music as a heterogeneous category and will present in each chapter the differences between Moroccan rappers music production. This thesis however specifically looks at how this diverse music production relates to the idea of cultural resistance by considering both ‘Politics’ and ‘politics’. Whether the rappers discuss Politics with big caps or their ‘everyday’ lives (politics with small caps) I follow Scott (1990), Bayat (2011) and Tripp (2013) in including the latter as specially relevant. At the same time, it examines how rappers have aligned themselves with local and global narratives of resistance. In this sense, resistance is not only related to the ‘Political’ discourse, a dialogue that may be found also in other cultural production. The particularity of rap as before stated is that it showcases the ‘political’ reaching a large audience through music, that is, the everyday stories of young urban Moroccan youth that would be lost otherwise. In this sense, resistance can also occur as youth rebellion against the authority of parents or even as a commercial product. In this sense, hip hop culture evidences the triumph of world capitalism, with rappers in Kenya –or for that matter Morocco– wearing Nike and Adidas clothes (Chang 2000, p.25). Analysis of the interesting relationship between hip hop, rap and the market, allows researchers to reveal “the often-confusing, self-contradictory, mutually exploiting, stereotype-generating morass that constitute the capitalist-driven world of global pop culture”

(2007, p.150). In other words, studies on hip hop culture not only reveal the voice of the excluded, but places hip hop within the market (mainly music industry, but also the movie industry, clothing and sportswear, advertisement campaigns and so forth) and the mass media, and is able to include within the notion of resistance other complexities of the youth's economic, political and social contexts. The study of rap music entails an understanding of the diverse fields that inform youth cultural production. This includes elements of place and time, social and political events, as well as taking into account the place of rap within the music market (globally and nationally), the state, the media (local and global), academia, and the position of the artists themselves.

This thesis therefore critically looks 'resistance' and 'dissent' as music production that aims to contest systems of power, however, it suggest the need to overcome the limits of these terms by including in the discussion the way Moroccan rap is marketed and consumed in Morocco and elsewhere. In transcending the constraints of the co-option vs. resistance discourse, I explore the ways rappers narrate their everyday lives in opposition to the 'Political' agendas that their music may entail. In other words, the significance of highlighting the 'politics' with small caps is that it shows the ways social knowledge and reality are produced and reproduced, but also shaped and transformed.

The mainstream narrative of hip hop's genesis has it beginning during the 1970s in Afro-Caribbean, African American, and Latino neighborhoods in New York (Schloss 2009, p.4). Urban policies marginalizing Black and Latino neighborhoods as well as social changes occurring in the US during what Tricia Rose (1994) calls 'Postindustrial New York' helped forge this youth culture. Rappers appeared in street

parties and gained importance over a short period of time (Rose 1994, pp.34–36). Afrika Bambaataa, a member of a New York street gang, transformed himself into a hip hop activist and organized “The Zulu Nation,”¹² shortly before travelling to France in the early 80s (Helenon 2006, p.151). In the beginning of the 1990s, rap music became rooted in Algeria, where groups gathered privately as is the case of the rap crew Intik (Cool) and MBS (Le Micro Brise le Silence, and in English the microphone breaks the silence) (Miliani 2002, p.765). Throughout this time, rap music and hip hop culture also began to germinate in Morocco.

During the 1970s, popular music groups such as Nass El Ghiwane or Jil Jilala re-invented the Moroccan music scene, which was up to then dominated by oriental Arabic music and patriotic and nationalist music that had emerged at the time of Independence in 1956 (Baldassarre 2003, p.83; Callen 2006, p.6; Mubarak cited in Fernández Parrilla & Islán Fernández 2009, p.153). Moroccan rap albums were informally released as audiocassettes as early as the mid-1990s. They were not played on public media, however, since rap was seen as a foreign genre and thus an attack on Moroccan identity (Abkari 2008). The rap artist Muslim, for example, started writing lyrics during the second half of the 90s in Tangiers and believed he was the only one rapping in the country (Muslim 2013, interview, June 26). In 1996, a group called Double A, which was formed by rapper Aminoffice and Ahmad from the city of Salé, released their album *Wakie* (Reality),¹³ then in 1998 they came out

¹² The Zulu Nation started as a hip hop organization in South Bronx focused on channeling young people’s anger into music, dance and graffiti in order to keep them away from gangs (Lipsitz 1994, p.26).

¹³ <http://hiphopdiplomacy.org/hip-hop-geography/arabia/morocco/> [Accessed October 25, 2013]; <http://qgprod.com/artist/aminoffice/> [Accessed March 4, 2014].

with a second album *M3ak Dima M3ak* (With You, Always With You).¹⁴ Muslim, along with his former group Zan9a Flow, released the album *Tanjawa Daba* in 2001.¹⁵ Some rappers and DJs who emerged during this decade had, as I discovered during my fieldwork in Morocco (2011-2013), started out as breakdancers. Khalid Douache, also known as DJ Key, was a breakdancer until he discovered the art of DJing, as was Masta Flow (2011, interview, November 2) from the group Casa Crew, who told me that he was also a breaker until he got injured and decided to start rapping. As Muslim (2013, interview, June 2013) also explained, the beginnings of the rap scene in the country were connected with breakdancing, and he discovered that other people met in a place called Dawliz in Tangiers to do both. By the end of the 1990s, Hicham Abkari –president of the Underground Federation,¹⁶ director of the Mohammed VI Theatre in Casablanca, and former programmer of the Festival de Casablanca– organized and recorded videos of rap crews and breakdancing battles in the popular neighborhood of Hay Mohammadi in Casablanca.¹⁷ At the beginning of the following decade, groups that have become extremely popular began to form like H-Kayne in Meknes, Fnaïre in Marrakech, Thug Gang and rapper Don Bigg in Casablanca.

¹⁴ https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EqRFdbjFmPU&list=UUkG3QIg_IBVcoynRJF-csIQ [Accessed March 4, 2014].

¹⁵ <http://qgprod.com/artist/muslim/> [Accessed March 4, 2014]; <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=H7G9A5tQ6c&list=PLEj6Dk3pzvlNCXorTNApxxVqqRYD8XC-F> [Accessed March 4, 2014].

¹⁶ The Moroccan Underground Federation is an association that gathers the actors of urban culture in Morocco to support and promote local urban cultures such as hip hop <http://www.festivaldecasablanca.ma/artiste/moroccan-underground-federation/> [Accessed July 6, 2014].

¹⁷ See for example a breakdance battle in 1999 (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LsJXwwnp0jk> [Accessed May 26, 2014]) or a performance of one of the first rap groups in Casablanca, Thug Gang, a crew that included one of the first publicly known female rappers in the country, Widad (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BrtuVh528RE> [Accessed May 26, 2014]).

Media outlets such as *TelQuel*¹⁸ or the radio station Hit Radio, one of the country's most successful music radio stations amongst youth,¹⁹ have played a big role in disseminating the work of Moroccan rappers. At the same time, while hip hop was taking root in Moroccan cities, big music festivals began popping up in the country at the turn of the millennium, coinciding with the coronation of the new king and bringing forward rappers as new figures in the national music scene. The first edition of the music festival *L'Boulevard de Jeunes Musiciens* in Casablanca took place in 1999, and provided a springboard for local groups engaged in contemporary music genres such as heavy metal, *fusion*²⁰ and rap. Later, music festivals like *Mawazine Rhythms du Monde* in Rabat, *Festival de Casablanca* or *Festival Timitar Agadir* began to include Moroccan rappers, in detriment of other genres like heavy metal, on their yearly programs. It is also notable that since 1999, most of the country's big music festivals have been sponsored by the Makhzen (for accounts of this relationship, see Belghazi 2006, p.101; Aït Mous & Wazif 2008, pp.295–296; Boum 2012a, p.24; Ben-Layashi 2013, p.151). Today, figures close to the monarchy typically supervise the festivals, as well as the associations in charge of creating them. For example, André Azoulay, adviser of Hassan II and Mohammed VI, is the patron of *Festival d'Essaouira* (Schaefer 2009, p.164), and Mohammed Kabbaj,

¹⁸ *TelQuel* is a weekly magazine written in French language known for pushing socio-political boundaries including criticism of the monarchy (Orlando 2009, p.133). In this thesis I focus on *TelQuel* because it is perceived as an outspoken and independent – from political parties and the State – oppositional source (Hegasy 2007, 29; Storm 2007, 108; Orlando 2009, xviii; Gershovich 2013). Moreover, the focus in this magazine is related to the fact that *TelQuel* follows closely local rappers' work providing with numerous articles useful to this thesis. However, I bear in mind that *TelQuel*'s staff is also criticized for belonging the same elite it attacks (Cohen & Jaidi 2006, p.8).

¹⁹ <http://www.afrik.com/article22838.html> [Accessed May 23, 2013]; <http://j20.ma/8ans-apres-son-lancement-hitradio-la-1ere-radio-au-maroc-pour-les-jeunes/> [Accessed May 23, 2013].

²⁰ The second section of Chapter One section describes the genre of fusion, as studied by Jeffrey Callen (2006).

Mohammed VI's adviser and wali of the Casablanca region,²¹ is the creator of the *Fondation Esprit de Fès* that participates in many festivals in Fez, including the *Fez Festival of World Sacred Music* (Aït Mous & Wazif 2008, p.296). During the years that Kabbaj was wali of Casablanca, the authorities of the city²² initiated the *Festival de Casablanca*, with a focus on urban culture, to provide a forum for the cultural and artistic entertainment produced in the region (*Aujourd'hui Le Maroc* June 1, 2006).²³ Though *L'Boulevard* was initiated by a group of young people is not related to the Makhzen. In the years following its conception, however, this festival encountered difficulties in obtaining public and private financial support (Callen 2006, 141). In 2009, the association EAC-L'Boulevard that organizes *L'Boulevard* accepted a check from the king for two million dirhams (£143,000) so that the association could pay off part of its debts. It is through examples like these that the hegemonic control of the Makhzen over big music festivals all over the country becomes apparent. This becomes problematic because it means that the ruling elite is able to choose the artists that participate, and select those to be excluded. Though many festivals are organized "under the high patronage of the king," it is the music festival *Mawazine Rhythms du Monde*, launched in 2002 in Rabat, that has particular significance due to the high profile of the artists invited to perform and its large budget. After the success of the first edition of the festival in 2005, *Festival de Casablanca*, an article in the magazine *TelQuel* (June 5, 2010)²⁴ suggested that the king also wanted Rabat

²¹ <http://www.worldpolicyconference.com/pdf/fr/guest/Kabbaj.pdf> [accessed October 22, 2013]; <http://www.maghress.com/fr/aujourd'hui/36991> [Accessed May 5, 2014].

²² These include the Wilaya du Grand Casablanca, Ville de Casablanca, Région du Grand Casablanca and the Conseil Préfectoral de Casablanca.

²³ <http://www.aujourd'hui.ma/maroc-actualite/focus/casablanca-le-cirque-en-attendant-le-festival-41934.html> [Accessed May 5, 2014].

²⁴ <http://www.telquel-online.com/En-couverture/Mawazine-un-miracle-royal/425> [Accessed July 23, 2014]. It must be noted that *Telquel's* webpage wrongly dates this article as written on April 25, 2012.

to have a big music festival. This festival has given the capital city of Morocco both national and international visibility each year, and has contributed to the centralization of political power in the capital city, which is otherwise considered a mere administrative center.

Morocco is not the only state that has used music as a diplomatic tool to support dominant political agendas. Hisham Aidi (2011, pp.26-28) suggests that the US has used jazz and recently hip hop to improve its image abroad. In France too, rappers functioned as a way to integrate Muslim minorities; at the same time, through its patronage, the government was still able to choose which Muslim artists to support and thus drive a particular discourse of inclusion (Ibid, p.35). Aidi uses the example of two rappers, Abd Al Malik and Médine; while the former has developed a spiritual discourse based on Sufi Islam, the latter deploys a strong political discourse denouncing social exclusion and proclaiming the need to protest. Where Abd Al Malik receives official recognition from the Ministry of Culture, Médine is ignored in the mainstream media pointing out the state's use of rap culture to carry out particular political agendas (Ibid, 35-36). The Cuban government is another example where through the organization and financing of an annual hip hop festival as well as the establishment of the Cuban Rap Agency (Agencia Cubana de Rap) which employs an elite group of rappers, has been able to dominate the scene (Mitchell 2001a, p.7; Miliani 2002, p.767; Baker 2005, p.369). Although Baker (2005, p.393) asserts that the idea for the agency sprang from rappers who were frustrated at their lack of commercial success, he also admits the ongoing debates about it being a tool to control Cuban rap.

Moroccan rappers participate in many of official festivals every year, and benefit from the symbolic and economic capital gain through participation. Rappers have, thus, been described as a device to promote the image of Morocco as an open and tolerant society, as will be explored in Chapter Three (Aït Mous & Wazif 2008, p.297; Boum 2012b, p.24). Because the state needs to manage and control feeling of exclusion experienced by youth, youth popular culture and especially hip hop has become an important method through which to impose a dominant political and social narrative. In this sense, the study of rap music in Morocco provides evidence of the power struggles or battlefield within the cultural field. Despite the fact that other music genres such as heavy metal or fusion have also become popular in Morocco and do express narratives of ‘resistance,’ rap in Morocco has reached producers and consumers (which includes audience but also media outlets) to a much further extent within the last decade. Therefore, this thesis it is rap that better reflect the tension between culture and state politics unraveling the ways in which youth as a social group may serve the agenda of the state headed by the Makhzen in shaping the image of the country as liberal, moderate and ‘modern.’

However, rap music is useful not only to the Makhzen, but has been a competing ground for other ideologically different groups. This is the case for Morocco’s strong secular intellectual tradition, which includes actors from secular civil society who subscribe to the principles of the French concept of *laïcité*, whereby religion should remain separate from state institutions (Cavatorta 2006, p.212). Civil society is here defined as an autonomous group of institutions and associations that stand between the state, the market, and family as a way of preventing tyranny (Cavatorta 2006, p.205). Examples of civil society groups in Morocco are the

AMDH (Association Marocaine des Droits de l'Homme), ADFM (Association Démocratique des Femmes du Maroc) or UPFM (Union Progressiste de Femmes Marocaines). In the MENA region, therefore, civil society in the MENA region has been identified “as a counter-weight to the state” (Sater 2007, p.4). Civil society participates in sustaining the democratic political system due to its ability to bring citizens together (Ibid p.205-206). In Morocco, secular liberal groups are often founded and run by members of the French-educated elite, for example the leaders or members of women’s associations (Cavatorta 2009, p.148). It has been argued that some sectors of civil society have difficulty relating to the majority of the Moroccan population due to the educational and socioeconomic gaps between them (Smith & Loudiy 2005, p.1096; Cavatorta 2009, p.148).

Some sections of the liberal secular civil society, which either functions under the state’s protection or is ‘forced’ to align with the state against a perceived Islamist danger, capitalize on rappers to push their secular agenda (Cavatorta 2009, p.141). This secular tradition shares in some part, not un-problematically, with the Makhzen their aim to “to enhance the image of Morocco as an authentic yet modern, tolerant, and diverse country” (Graiouid & Belghazi 2013, p.262). Other countries of the MENA region like Morocco also use the civil society as tool to legitimate the states’ liberalization projects which contributes to maintain their central authority (Daadaoui 2011, p.111). Islamist movements, however, have also worked to shape the cultural field. Headed by the PJD (Party of Justice and Development, or in Arabic *‘Adāla wa Tanmiya*),²⁵ has been the promotion of what they call *al fan annazīf* or “clean art,”

²⁵ The PJD is the largest legalized Islamist political party of Morocco (Linn 2011, p.16). Its founding principals did not support the monarchy, however, as Francesco Cavatorta (2009, p.144) argues, the PJD has been largely co-opted since it recognized the primacy of the king.

which is seen as falling in line with an ‘Islamic’ ethos (Ibid, p. 263). This thesis places rap within these different overlapping political trends, and adopts a critical perspective that allows for a more nuanced investigation of the complexity of cultural field in Morocco. It further asks whether Moroccan rappers have found spaces outside the control of the various power groups in the country, where they can present independent voices.

As a first mode of analysis, close readings of some rappers’ lyrics and video clips are made in order to highlight the complexity of the rap scene, and look at the rap scene and its political context beyond the binary oppositions of ‘good’ and ‘bad’ rap or ‘rebellious’ and ‘co-opted’ rap. Indeed, when looked at in this sense, rap as a popular cultural production cannot be studied in terms of binary modes of resistance or domination. Therefore, although this thesis considers music as a tool for social and political control as Hisham Aidi (2014, p. xxvi) suggests, it also examines the ways in which rap music motivates Moroccan youth to build solidarities and define youth as a socially and politically active group by employing certain language, clothes, and urban spaces.

Challenges in the Study of Youth Cultural Production in the MENA Region

The study of rap music and hip hop culture as well as its global links is a subject that has attracted much attention in the academic community (Mitchell 2001b; Alim 2006; Pennycook 2006; Terkourafi 2012; Morgan & Ennett 2011). The global spread of hip hop and rap music beyond Europe and the US has motivated the study of what has become a world phenomenon from the point of view of its local contexts (See for example Huq 2006). However, these academic studies are rarely completely devoted

to the study of hip hop in its local space, and rather look at the music as part of a global movement (for example Alim et al. 2009; Terkourafi 2012); or continental cultural expressions (in the case of Africa see for example Saucier 2011; Charry 2012). There are two available collections of essays focused on African hip hop *Native Tongues* (2011) edited by Saucier and *Hip Hop Africa* (2012b) edited by Charry, however, they do not include essays on the northern region's hip hop, and thus miss the opportunity to challenge divisions that overlook the Maghreb's connection to the African continent. Studies of popular culture in Morocco are often presented in collections that study the Arabic-speaking countries or the MENA region (see for example Ambrust 2000; El Hamamsy & Soliman 2013), and studies in Africa frequently overlook Morocco and North African countries in general (see for example Charry 2012; Falola & Fleming 2012). Yet, Morocco is socially, politically, economically and culturally related to Africa as a region (see for example Söderbaum & Taylor 2008; Bentahar 2010). Though in many studies, Morocco remains conceptually part of the MENA, instead, Morocco must be understood as a multiethnic, multiracial and multilingual nation with African, Middle Eastern, and European influences built around its Amazigh roots and cultural heritage. It is with this framework that the present thesis considers Moroccan identity.

With regard to the MENA region, there is not yet any major study that covers hip hop culture in the MENA or the Arabic-speaking region. Hip hop in the MENA region has not yet been critically and comparatively studied to as to establish its possible socio-political links between the different national and local scene of the region (especially after the 2011 MENA uprisings). Forthcoming doctoral dissertation by Kendra Salois and Nina ter Laan intend to start filling this void.

Articles, however, on rap and hip hop in the region have been published over the last decade including Hadj Miliani (2002) on Algeria, Thomas Solomon (2005; 2006) on Turkey, Usama Kahf (2007) who deals with Arabic hip hop, David McDonald (2012) in Palestine, Laudan Nooshin (2011) on the Iranian rap music scene, as well the recent article of Kendra Salois (2014) on Morocco.

However, young rappers in the MENA region have served as a marketable item (for example Sabry 2010; Nieuwkerk 2011) or aligned superficially as part of a global Muslim youth (for example Alim 2005; Daulatzai 2012). Young members of the hip hop community feature on the cover in both Tarik Sabry's *Cultural Encounters in the Arab World* (2010) or the collection of essays in *Muslim Rap, Halal Soaps, and Revolutionary Theatre* edited by Karin Van Nieuwkerk (2011) [Figure 2]. However, research on hip hop culture and its artistic expressions in the Arabic-speaking world or Islam in both books is limited. Sabry's book limits the discussion of rap to a few lines (pp. 60-61), though the picture on its front cover is of two male MCs (or rappers) with microphones performing in the street. Furthermore, though Sabry's book only mentions graffiti on a few pages (pp. 67-68), the book has four of its five pictures to graffiti art, and its title highlights Muslim rap as the focus of the book, which is emphasized by the cover depicting a young man dressed in hip hop-style clothes. Nevertheless, only one of its nine chapters is devoted to rap, and a second to heavy metal, which was not referenced on the cover. Unlike these earlier works, this thesis provides an in-depth analysis providing a point of departure from which to establish links among the rap scene in the MENA region and Africa beyond the tendency to consider hip hop as a marketable culture.



Figure 2. Book covers featuring hip hop culture

This thesis further challenges academic works that gather the study of Muslim youth in countries where Islam constitutes the religious identity of a minority, and countries where Islam constitutes the religious identity of a minority without a problematization of the category ‘global Muslim youth,’ such as the edited collections by cooke & Lawrence (2005), Herrera & Bayat (2010), and Daulatzai (2012). In connecting youth around the world, Samy H. Alim (2005, p.265) argues in the edited book by cooke & Lawrence (2005) for the existence of a “transglobal hip hop *umma*,” which rests on the idea of a borderless Islamic nation where citizenship is not based on contemporary national borders but on faith. Alim’s evidence of the existence of an *umma* is based on the connection between African American Muslim movements and hip hop. The ideas of Islam and words in Arabic have been part of

hip hop since the early 1970s, since both are also related to the racial discourse in the United States with the conversion of Civil Rights Movement leader Malcolm X to Islam, or the creation of the Nation of Islam. Furthermore, members of the hip hop nation who represent these movements –as Alim posits (2005, p.266)– believe that the way in which the Quran was revealed to the Prophet Muhammed –orally and to a large extent through rhymed prose—shows parallels to how hip hop lyrics are produced. Though compelling, Alim’s argument is problematic because the cases he presents are limited to the US context. Though Alim warns of the lack of research on the central role of Islam in hip hop, he still claims that there is a transglobal umma of hip hop through the research of US Muslim movements and members of the US hip hop community overlooking the voices of non-North American Muslim rappers. In his essay, Alim presents the voices of the US Muslim minority as “speaking for” other youth that, however, may not feel a connection with US Muslims. Though Alim presents an academically stimulating idea, further thorough research on non-American rap scenes involving Muslim rappers must take place in order to assert the existence of a hip hop umma.

The work of Sohail Daulatzai *Black Star, Crescent Moon* (2012) presents a similar scenario in which the author connects the history of Black Islam, Black radicalism, and what he calls, the “Muslim Third World” in the post–World War II era. The book argues that in their fight against racism US Black communities searched for inspiration in the radical anti-colonialist struggle of Muslim countries in Asia and Africa. However, Daulatzai does not define “Muslim Third World” which is a term that remains unexplained and un-problematized throughout the book. Though Daulatzai does claim that the creation of this ‘Muslim Third World’ is

Eurocentric (2012, p.xix), this comes at the expense of challenging such a framework and the author perpetuates it by engaging with it. In other words, by arguing for the imperialist domination of the ‘Muslim Third World,’ Daulatzai not only homogenizes the Muslim world, but also maintains the problematic division of the world as First and Third. More importantly, like Alim (2005), the bulk of Daulatzai’s case studies come from thinkers like Malcolm X, as well as sportsmen like Muhammad Ali or hip hop artists like Public Enemy all US-based. Though Daulatzai claims the use of “cinema from the Muslim Third World” (2012, pp.xxvi–xxvii), this is limited to the study of the *Battle of Algiers* (1966) that in fact is an Italian-Algerian co-production. Therefore, just as Alim (2005), Daulatzai fails to highlight non-European and American voices arguing a connection in which the analysis of these voices is extremely limited.

This thesis challenges Alim (2005) and Daulatzai (2012) perspective of the global Muslim community offering a nuanced account on the US/Morocco rap connections. In none of the interviews I carried out with Moroccan rappers –or for that matter any of the interviews published in the press that I collected during my research –the rappers highlighted religion as a crucial or focal point of common identity between Morocco and the US. Islam, therefore, does not appear important for Moroccan rappers who rather referred to US, French or Algerian rappers as part of their hip hop cultural baggage. Moroccan rappers link to US, French, and Algerian rappers cannot be simplistically connected to the conversion of popular US-based rappers such as Mos Def to Islam or attributed to Malcolm X’s influence. While identification with Islam is not critical to make the connection between Moroccan and other rappers around the globe, this thesis argues, however, that marginality

related to racial issues in US history contribute to connecting the experiences of Moroccan rappers with experiences of exclusion of Black and Latino inner city youth in the United States (this will be explored in Chapter Five). This thesis examines the links between young Moroccan rappers' music production and the global rap scene, thus broadening the connections beyond the limits of religious identity and works to rather provide evidence of the complexities of the global cultural flows.

This project suggests that in studying hip hop as an example of global processes or cultural flows, area studies must be seriously challenged to break stereotypes and narratives such as that of the so-called Third versus First world. Area Studies as well as international media are often unable to go beyond the study of hip hop in the MENA as a mere 'protest' culture trapped within the binary of 'resistant' versus 'co-opted.' Hip hop in the MENA region is often presented uniquely as a 'resistant' music genre voicing the struggle of its young angry population, as indeed was the case during the MENA uprisings in 2010-2011.²⁶ Although the Arabic-speaking street and its youth are often discussed as a space to protest and express despair, this thesis argues together with Asef Bayat (2010, p.11) that the street is also a public space for youth to claim other forms of expression, political or otherwise. In this sense, this thesis challenges the media's essentialization of Moroccan rappers – as well as the rest of the MENA region and Africa (Mose 2013, p.249)– as angry and oppressed youth. In order to challenge these ideas, the collection of data over two

²⁶ http://www.lemonde.fr/afrique/article/2011/01/11/le-rap-porte-parole-de-la-jeunesse-tunisienne_1463638_3212.html [Accessed May 2, 2014]; <http://www.time.com/time/world/article/0,8599,2049456,00.html> [Accessed April 28, 2014]; <http://content.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,2050022,00.html> [Accessed April 28, 2014]; <http://www.guardian.co.uk/music/2011/feb/27/egypt-tunisia-music-protests> [Accessed April 28, 2014]; <http://muftah.org/rapping-the-revolution/> [Accessed April 28, 2014]; <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-14146243> [Accessed April 28, 2014].

years during my fieldwork was crucial, particularly as it started in 2011 in the aftermath of the fall down of Tunisia and Egypt's oppressive regimes

In order to avoid falling into Eurocentric theories of global connections, the analysis of cultural production like rap in non-European or non-US contexts must receive critical attention to highlight its specificity, independence, and locality. In a later study, Sami H. Alim (2009, p.8) acknowledged how scholars studying different hip hop scenes around the world have challenged the "original origin myth" of hip hop in the Bronx. As Alim (2009, p.9) argues, rappers do not necessarily rely on hip hop's Black American culture to show a constant dialogue with the US hip hop scene as a source for new ideas while creating their own local trends. This insight better portrays the case for Moroccan rappers who openly acknowledge the dialogue between hip hop in the US and their claims for a distinct Moroccan hip hop scene. Moroccan rappers state their connection to US rappers such as Tupac Shakur, the Wu Tang Clan, Nas, and Jay-Z for different reasons, including harnessing the power transmitted in their lyrics or to reference their powerful beats. This dialogue, however, also exists between Moroccan artists and other rap scenes, like with the French rap groups IAM or NTM, or the Algerian pioneer rap group MBS, proving that the US scene is not a required participant in the hip hop dialogue, however, it is often used strategically by artists for their own ends as this thesis will show. Therefore, while this thesis acknowledges and explores the links to the US rap scene, it privileges the study of local particularities as elements essential to understanding of Morocco's hip hop and rap scene.

Because of the complex identities of Moroccan rappers, attention must also be paid to how international media positions young Moroccans rappers as an artistic

‘other.’ In order to undertake this study, I strategically relate international media to the category of ‘world music’²⁷ within the global music market as international media feeds from the Eurocentric construction of Moroccan musicians often positioned within this market as part of a wide, vague and oversimplified category which includes musicians from African and MENA countries. Often, non-European or North American music is discussed in less complex or nuanced terms by considering its ‘interesting’ aesthetics even when it’s politically uninteresting, or by praising politically engaged music that doesn’t have a significant aesthetic value (Feld 1995, p.96). This is similar to the phenomenon Frederic Jameson (1986, p.69) describes when he argues that postcolonial ‘third world’ literature often consists of national allegories on the construction of postcolonial nations. These texts necessarily have a political dimension, which is problematic as literature from newly independent nations is homogenized into one category. This phenomenon is replicated in the study of rap in non-European countries, which has predominantly been conducted in simplistic terms and has focused on the rap’s political dimension without thoroughly linking the politics of the genre with the aesthetics. Therefore, the aims of this thesis is to position Moroccan rap within its complex local and national contexts and investigate the ways in which the aesthetics of the music embrace and challenge social and political beliefs and values, as well as Orientalist stereotypes. The politics and aesthetics of Moroccan rappers are presented here as being in a constant tension with the Moroccan society and culture, as well as with the global music market.

²⁷ This term is highly complex and remains a debate within academia. Simon Frith (cited in Hesmondhalgh 2013, p.306) states that in the 1980s, a number of record companies and music press entrepreneurs adopted the term ‘world music’ to promote popular non-Western music in the UK. In this sense, this term as Bob W. White (2011, p.1) suggests serves as “an umbrella category under which various types of traditional and non-Western music are produced for a Western consumption.”

The market has also reflected the hype surrounding the MENA region and Muslim rappers in the works where pop artists capitalize on Morocco's brand as a cool trademark. Jennifer López' song "On the Floor," for example, includes Morocco as part of a sequence of names of 'cool' places such as Ibiza or Miami; the US rapper Wiz Khalifa named a song "Morocco," but does not refer to the country in his lyrics; and Mariah Carey named her son Moroccan. The city of Casablanca has also received attention from US rappers, with Low Deep T using a homonym for Casablanca as a song title.²⁸ The exotic image that Morocco embodies is a trademark in English (not in French, *Maroc*, or Arabic, *El Maghreb*), and is also capitalized on by local artists such as the singer Oum or DJ Van. Oum's last album is called *Soul of Morocco* (2013) and was marketed within the category of world music.²⁹ While the latter song "Taragalte" pays tribute to the town of M'hamid El Ghizlane, an oasis in the desert south of Morocco, and home to the Taragalte Music Festival, the former song is not related to the desert in any way. As argued in Chapter Three (p.179), shooting video clips in the desert contributes to the exoticization and depolitization³⁰ of Morocco, and is meant to represent it as a touristic country void of social or political struggle. This exoticization is also reflected in the clothes worn in these clips and on the cover of the album. Her uncovered shoulders and arms do not resemble everyday Moroccan dress as the traditional *djellaba*.³¹ However, Oum often wears Amazigh jewelry that reinforces her Moroccan 'roots.' DJ Van (as Chapter One section two will argue) also capitalizes on the exotic image of Morocco in his

²⁸ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VHBcS0fYWfc> [Accessed June 9, 2014].

²⁹ An article in the newspaper *La Vie Eco* (February 1, 2013) describes it as Oum's first international album http://www.lavieeco.com/news/culture/oum-soul-of-morocco-un-premier-album-international-24511.html#.UQzUD_zjURI.twitter [Accessed June 9, 2014].

³⁰ In employing the term "depolitization" I refer to Abdesalam Maghraoui who considers it to be "the marginalization of questions of legitimacy or sovereignty and... the concomitant political primacy given to economic issues" (2002, p.24).

³¹ The djellaba or jellaba is a traditional North African long dress for men and women.

first solo album called *Moroccan Touch* (2013). The title of the album is homonymous to a clothing trademark, Moroccan Touch inspired by Morocco's colors, lights and its savoir-faire.³² These examples suggest that popular music is playing a big role in branding Morocco as an exotic and trendy trademark. This thesis, especially Chapter One and Five, considers how these trends in popular and the music market have had an effect on the work of young urban rappers as they construct their own approach to politics and aesthetics.

This thesis challenges, therefore, narratives that emphasize certain traits of the region's youth, such as Islam or 'protest,' by looking at the way location is used politically and socially to market music to global, national and local audiences. It examines Moroccan rap and how it relates to global, national and local spaces without imposing frames such as 'Islamic' or 'Postcolonial,' but rather problematizes these and other categories of Moroccan youth identity homogenously considering them as parts of the artists' complex and multilayered identities. This thesis does not engage with First and Third World divisions, neither does it intend to present the case of Moroccan rappers as the voice of the Muslim young people from the MENA region. Rather, it challenges the problematic statements that connect Muslim youth globally. In other words, this thesis intends to show that, despite researchers' enthusiasm about global connections, there needs to be a better understanding of the ways these connections are established, looking at not only cases from the US or Europe, but theories and case studies from diverse countries, cities and regions. Therefore, this thesis offers a nuanced and multilayered analysis of the musical production of Moroccan rappers that challenges the ways in which youth of the

³² <http://moroccantouch.com/pret-a-porter-femme/> [Accessed February 5, 2014].

region have been studied by providing a collection of primary data that will be detailed in the following section.

Methods and Methodology

This thesis is framed within the critical perspective of Cultural Studies as a field that considers the study of popular culture in its specific contexts and its social and political ramifications (Felski 2005, p.32). The field of Cultural Studies provides a framework in which to unravel the nuances, tensions, complexities and power relations of contemporary Moroccan urban youth cultures, particularly rap music and urban artistic expressions. This thesis thus engages with the Cultural Studies tradition of understanding the meaning of cultural products through the context of the changing relations of power (Storey 2003, p.x). I use an interdisciplinary approach that draws on sociology, anthropology, political science, history, geography, and ethnomusicology. This Cultural Studies approach serves particularly to highlight the specificities of youth cultural expressions, such as rap, and to critically explore this music production in conjunction with the politics of language and the use of public, as well as local, national and global spaces. Thus, through this approach, I also reflect on the significance of the market demands and processes of consumption, everyday practices and experiences, as well as examining how voices of dissent are shaped and the strategies of rappers to gain a voice and self-expression. Moreover, although I thoroughly examine process of co-option and dissent, I also relate the politics of rap to the aesthetics of cultural forms.

The critical study of the Moroccan rap scene in this thesis is meant to contribute to the field both in the quantity and quality of studies outside Western

Europe and the US. Hip hop culture in the US has been researched in detail, including university courses and diplomas in US universities devoted to the subject. However, Moroccan hip hop culture is limited to a few brief articles by researchers not specialized in youth culture, which have also overlooked the role of artistic creativity and skills in their research trapped within the formula of co-opted versus resistance rap (Most notably the work of Aomar Boum 2012a; 2012b; 2013; Ben-Layashi 2013). The works on rap music and hip hop culture in the US from scholars like Tricia Rose (1994; 2008) and Halifu Osumare (2007), and also the different essays in *That's the Joint! The Hip-Hop Studies Reader* (Forman & Neal 2004)³³ have inspired new approaches that helped me go beyond simple dualistic models in examining rap music in Morocco. Because of the lack of previous in-depth research on Moroccan rap, it is specially important to capitalize on a Cultural Studies interdisciplinary approach with which to map the field.

This project relies on Stuart Hall's (1980; 1981; 1990; 1996; 2000) work, which remains relevant to the study of popular culture in Morocco. Hall's (1981, p.233) idea of culture and cultural practices as a battlefield marked by contradictions is important for my thesis which aims to go beyond the perception of rap music as linear or as divided into binary oppositions of 'good' and 'bad' rap. Hall (Ibid) claims that popular culture constitutes an arena of constant and uneven struggle where the dominant culture aims at constantly disorganizing and reorganizing popular culture. In explaining Hall's idea of popular culture, John Storey argues that it can be understood as the battlefield or "the arena of struggle and negotiation

³³ Further editions of this collection has been published including articles non-US rap and hip hop scenes as for example Usama Kahf's article on Arabic hip hop earlier published in the *Journal of Popular Music Studies* (2007).

between the interests of dominant groups and the interests of subordinate groups” (Storey 2003, p.51). Drawing on Gramsci, Storey claims that for Hall, the battlefield is located at the heart of society’s unequal divisions of power relations in terms of ethnicity, gender, class and ‘race’ (Ibid). In this battlefield, Hall wrote, there are points of resistance and points of supersession, refusal and capitulation, but more importantly, there are no “once-for-all victories... but there are always strategic positions to be won or lost” (Hall 1981, p.233). Despite the methodological use of the battlefield, this thesis considers the danger of falling into excessively dichotomized interpretations of popular cultural production as models of resistance and/or domination (Hofmeyr 2004, p.130).

In order to go beyond the mere political and politicized approach to rap music, I use the Cultural Studies approach and interdisciplinarity to explore the important role of aesthetics, the use of lyrics, language, symbols and video clips as artistic signifiers that allow me to argue for the locality and specificity of Moroccan rap.³⁴ This thesis critically engages with some ideas proposed by Hisham Aidi (2011; 2014), particularly in his last work *Rebel Music: Race, Empire and the New Muslim Youth Culture* (2014) where he offers a deep analysis of different local contexts and their different music genres, such as hip hop in Brazil and France. Aidi successfully connects notions of Muslim identity with music, race and power relations in youth culture engaging with the complexities embedded in local hip hop scenes, analyzing connections in terms of religion and other identity traits, however, not falling into

³⁴ This thesis offers direct online links to the songs employed in the analysis as well citing the original and translated excerpt of the lyrics. The reproduction of the full lyrics would have added more depth to the analysis, however, due to copyright regulations it is not possible to offer the complete reproduction of the lyrics in this thesis. Nevertheless, I intend to elaborate an edited publication of the lyrics of Moroccan rappers in the near future gathering the adequate copyrights.

oversimplified statements. More importantly, Aidi presents a detailed study that highlights the uniqueness and specificities of music genres in local contexts. My thesis engages with these issues and attempts to explore the connections in Moroccan rap between individual identities and group solidarities, notions of class and marginality, and issues of the state's co-optation of young rappers and their attempts to use or/and challenge dominant narratives and social and political hegemonies. Laudan Nooshin's (2009) ideas on music and power also inspire this thesis to a large extent, as she acknowledges the complex layers of social, political and economic contexts in which music is produced and experienced. Particularly significant for this thesis is the fact that Nooshin highlights the relationship between the aesthetic and the political dimension of music, and whether the aesthetics camouflages the political meaning (Ibid, p.6) or informs us about power relations (Ibid, p.11). Therefore, this thesis incorporates Nooshin's emphasis on the way music weaves together the social, political and aesthetic, whether openly or through subtle means (Ibid, p.31).

Cultural Studies has often been understood as a synonym for a political reading and ideological critique of literature and art, and has been blamed for the death of aesthetics (Felski 2005, pp.29–31). However, as Rita Felski argues, Cultural Studies does not destroy aesthetics, but rather it broadens “the definition of what counted as art” (2005, p.32). In considering the significance of aesthetics in rap music I follow the work of Simon Frith (1991; 1996a; 1996b), particularly in his insightful analysis in *Performing Rites* (1996b) as he considers that music does not simply reflect social values but it creates them ((1996b, p.250). Here, the politics of aesthetics are considered to be an essential part of the study of Moroccan rap as they inform us as to how urban Moroccan youth experience this genre. I pay critical

attention to the ways rappers' creativity and artistic skills –quality of rhymes, lyrics, flow, punchlines,³⁵ and the use of creative language–convey the artists' politics and connect them with the youth, particularly the urban unprivileged. In order to assess the rappers aesthetics I methodologically use Pierre Bourdieu's notion of the cultural field, and symbolic and cultural capital particularly in Chapter Five. Bourdieu's work is helpful in understanding how rappers' work is valued within the Moroccan cultural field, not only by the state headed by the Makhzen and some sections of civil society groups, but also by the audience itself. I use Bourdieu's notions as theoretical tools that allow us to address questions of 'authenticity' that are recurrent in the study and analysis of popular culture. In the subject of the 'authenticity' and analysis of the position of Moroccan rap within the Eurocentric category of 'world music,' I consider the studies of researchers on popular music such as Philip Bohlman (1988; 2010), Allan Moore (2002), Timothy D. Taylor (2004) and Steven Feld (1995). Bohlman and Moore unravel the nuanced relationship between 'authenticity,' music genres and the audience. Taylor and Feld use the idea of 'authenticity' within the 'world music' category to argue that 'world music' is often classified and essentialized according to its marketability rather than its aesthetic value. I also use Richard Middleton's (2006, p.206) work, which frames 'authenticity' within the processes of consumption and suggests that it is not so important what 'authenticity' is, but how it is culturally produced.

In this thesis, I also draw on Paul Gilroy's (1994; 2000; 2004) criticism of scholars who romanticize rap music by considering them 'authentically' rebellious.

³⁵ The Oxford English Dictionary defines 'punchline' as "The final phrase or sentence of a joke or story, providing humour or some other crucial element" (http://www.oed.com/search?searchType=dictionary&q=punchline&_searchBtn=Search [Accessed April 22, 2014]).

Gilroy argues that most critics essentialize rap as a subculture rebelling against the system, while rap is actually dominated by “revolutionary conservatism” (Gilroy 2000, pp.205–206). For Gilroy (Ibid, p.206), while rap can be seen as revolutionary in its presentation of violence as principle in social and political interactions, it is also conservative in its rigid organization of gender roles. Gilroy’s insight inspires this thesis to consider the ways in which researchers and media have over-romanticized rap music as an eminently revolutionary genre, essentializing rap and youth as uniquely angry subjects without looking further into understanding rap in the MENA region.

In order to assess the Moroccan rap scene as a space for youth expression, I draw on Asef Bayat’s idea of the street in the MENA region in *Life As Politics* (2010) as a political site but also as a space for youth to express their discontent through artistic forms. It is where they meet and discuss their daily lives and their social, political and economic concerns, and where they establish connections and solidarities (2010, p.12). I also use Bayat’s notion of “social *nonmovements*” as a significant theoretical tool that allows distinct voices to emerge. Social *nonmovements* are those collective actions carried out by non-collective actors who are not necessarily driven by a similar ideology or leadership but whose actions trigger social change (Ibid, p.14). This notion is useful in reflecting on the works of Moroccan rappers individually however considering it within an heterogeneous scene with which a large part of urban youth engage as members of the hip hop culture. Moreover, Bayat’s focus on youth culture and public urban spaces depicts them not only as sites for voicing despair, but also as places where young people struggle to construct spaces of youth solidarity. This argument is important because

it deconstructs simplistic associations of popular culture with ‘protest.’ Therefore, despite the fact that Bayat’s work is not exclusively related to culture, it allows us to consider a broader range of factors within urban youth culture, such as the construction of solidarities, the importance of public spaces like the street, and the many layers of youth identities.

Therefore, I am inspired by all these theorists and researchers, Hall, Bourdieu, Scott, Rose, Osumare, Aidi, Nooshin, Felski, Frith, Middleton, Gilroy, and Bayat, to investigate Moroccan rap in its locality and complexity as well as in its relationship to society, politics and the global market, circulation and consumption while avoiding the trap of presenting resistance vs. co-option as a simple binary. For this reason, this thesis focuses exclusively on rappers that have emerged in the Moroccan cultural field when rap music started to be promoted after the Casablanca terrorist bombing on May 16, 2003. This day, twelve men loaded with bombs attacked a five-star hotel, a Spanish restaurant and a Jewish community centre in the centre of Casablanca, the economic capital of the country.³⁶ Since this event, rappers have gained momentum in actively participating in public cultural events, including music festivals, TV and radio shows, advertisements in the state’s aims to promote the country as ‘modern’ and liberal and counter the ‘threat’ of radical Islamists groups. These rappers include the groups H-Kayne and Fnaïre, and rappers Don Bigg, Mobydick, Chaht Man and Muslim. I also look at single songs of groups such as Rwapa Crew despite their limited impact within the rap scene. Finally, I explore the work of young rappers who belong to the new generation of Moroccan rappers, mainly rapper Dizzy DROS and Shayfeen in order to establish a broader perspective.

³⁶ These events and their social and political consequences are further discussed in Chapter Three.

In delving into the musical works of these diverse artists, this thesis presents the complexities of the rap scene and urban youth culture in Morocco.

Absent in this thesis are Moroccan female rappers, mainly artists such as Soultana and Tendresse. Despite the fact that in the initial plan of this thesis was to dedicate a chapter to female rappers focusing on power dynamics from a gender studies perspective, it soon became clear the need for a larger study on this issue including a comparative study of female rappers in other countries of the MENA region. The case for such a decision includes the fact that after Soultana and Tendresse released one single each that dealt with women's lives in Morocco in 2010, both of them have not produced more music until the main research work of this thesis concluded at the end of 2013. Therefore, a future project will focus on not only their music production but also the lack thereof. In this vein, this research must consider how these two rappers have gained voice outside Morocco with such a small music production, and if there are similar cases in other countries of the region and beyond.

The methods of research of this thesis are primarily close critical discourse analysis of lyrics and video clips of rappers in Morocco. The number of video clips is limited as compared to the number of rap songs produced and published in social media, particularly YouTube, so therefore I solely rely on lyrics when the song does not have a video clip. Written versions of lyrics, however, are rarely available and not reliable in correctly transcribing the rappers' lyrics. For this reason, I have devoted considerable part of my research to transcribing and translating the songs of rap groups I analyze in the thesis as part of my collection of primary material. I have systematically collected all the songs that are available in the market and on the

Internet and managed to provide an English translation drawing on my knowledge of Moroccan Arabic or Darija.³⁷ The translations of the songs, as well as interviews and other quotes in Darija, French and Spanish are my own, although, the authors of the lyrics have occasionally clarified some of their lyrics' meanings, particularly neologisms or terms used locally. My translation of the lyrics are basic literal translations meant to convey the meaning to the reader and they are not an attempt to provide a comprehensive translation as that is beyond the scope of this thesis.

For the transcription of Arabic I follow two systems, one for Modern Standard Arabic (MSA) and a different one for Moroccan Arabic or Darija. For MSA I follow the American Library Association and the Library of Congress system. However, in the transcription of texts in Darija, I follow the alphanumeric Latinized Arabic widely used in Arab countries by young people (Aboelezz 2012, p.48). This system does not follow the scholarly transcriptions of classical Arabic, as it combines numbers and letters. This system facilitates the adaptation of regional specificities of the language by employing common characters available on any computer keyboard (as opposed to complicated transliteration systems that use special symbols). In particular, Moroccan rappers often use the alphanumeric characters to write their names such as rapper L3arbe from Zan9a Flow or L7a9ed (the Arabic transcription would be as follows, L'arbe, Zanja Flow, and Lhaqed). By employing numbers for nonexistent consonants in English, this system allows words to resemble their local sound in a simpler manner than scholarly transliteration. The decision to use this system and not the common Arabic transliteration system is

³⁷ Darija is frequently described as 'Moroccan Arabic,' however, following an editorial in *TelQuel* (June 17, 2006) by Ahmed R. Benchemsi, it is simply 'Moroccan.' Even if the majority of words in Darija come from Arabic, it also contains words from diverse origins including Berber, French, and Spanish all of them comprising a common language with its own variants in Morocco.

related to the clarity that this system provides in showing the differences of Darija versus Modern Standard Arabic. In Morocco, the main changes of this system is in the following Arabic letters: the *hamza* is written with the number 2, the *ḥā'* with 7, the *ʿayn* with 3, and *qāf* with 9.

I, therefore, reproduce the names of Moroccan rappers in the way in which they spell them on their album covers or their official social websites. Although rappers are often not consistent in spelling their names, I limit here to only one. I use this transcription system as a form of respect to the authors' choice of transliteration of their names while at the same time using a system of writing widely used and understood by Arabic-speaking youth in various media outlets. Rappers and Moroccan youth have mastered this system and also scholars working on Darija and Moroccan youth such as Dominique Caubet (2012). Here again, I use the alphanumeric Latinized Arabic and not the Arabic standard transliteration as the majority of lyrics are found online and are written employing this system. Although this transcription system originated for online communication, there is increasing evidence that this is no longer the case. Mariam Aboelezz (2010; 2012) provides evidence of handwritten texts using this transcription in Cairo and in Egyptian magazines. The fact that these transliterations of names and lyrics appear on the cover of their albums proves that this system is not exclusively used online. This transliteration system has extended to social media, advertisements,³⁸ some literary works (for example in some works of the writers Youssef Amine Elalamy,

³⁸ See for example, the following advertisement http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aHQMhgo6siU&feature=c4-overview&list=UUGGLDzycFH8T_joeZBxgSHA [Accessed June 10, 2014]).

Mohamed Berrada, Youssef Fadel and Mohamed Elkhadiri),³⁹ and articles in the press namely in the magazine *Nichane*, which was wholly written in Darija and which is now banned.⁴⁰

My fieldwork and my experience of the rap scene in Morocco, as well as my interviews with various rappers, cultural actors and stakeholders is an essential part of the methodology as it has allowed me to collect firsthand and rare primary material and critically engage with various rappers and cultural actors. It has also allowed me to better understand various questions to do with the politics of language, class, issues of national identity and nationalism in Morocco by closely following debates in national media on these issues. Moreover, due to the scarce research in the area of Moroccan popular youth culture and especially hip hop, this project has benefited from a close critical experience of the field as I attended annual music festivals, visited the rappers' home and professional studios, and maintained regular contact with the rappers and the rap scene itself. My active research in the field started in June 2011 and lasted until December 2013. The number of articles on Moroccan rappers in Moroccan and international media is far from negligible. In Morocco, as well as in other countries around the world (Kelley 2006, p.xvi), rap music and rappers have attracted the media's attention serving to this thesis study on processes of consumption. In the last decade, Moroccan rappers have featured in a large number of articles, namely the Moroccan French language magazine *TelQuel*, in documentaries such as the movie *Casanayda* (2007), in foreign media, such as an

³⁹ <http://www.medias24.com/CULTURE-LOISIRS/pdf8824-Un-prix-litteraire-recompensera-la-darija.html> [Accessed June 10, 2014].

⁴⁰ In 2010, due to an advertisers' boycott coordinated by the ONA group whose main shareholders is the Moroccan royal family, the magazine was faced with financial insolvency and had to shut down (http://www.lemag.ma/Boycott-publicitaire-Nichane-disparait-TelQuel-craint-le-meme-sort_a43939.html [Accessed July 9, 2014]; <http://www.yabiladi.com/articles/details/3366/nichane-victime-d-un-crime-publicitaire.html> [Accessed July 9, 2014]).

episode of *Al-Jazeera*'s "Next Music Station" (2011), or the articles in *Aljazeera* by the scholar Mark Levine.⁴¹ Rap musicians in Morocco also appear in TV shows on public channels such as *Ajial* in 2M or Hit Radio, a privately owned radio station focused on youth, and in big music festivals sponsored by the king such as *Mawazine* or independent ones such as *L'Boulevard*. These articles and interviews are useful as objects of analysis, but are rarely a reliable source of information as they are often full of stereotypes and, particularly those written on international media, lack accurate knowledge of the Moroccan rap scene. I conducted interviews with rappers such as Hatim and Azzedine from the group H-Kayne, Mobydick, Masta Flow from the group Casa Crew, both members of the group Shayfeen, Philo from the group Thug Gang, Dizzy DROS and Muslim in addition to other hip hop artists like Rabie Graffiti, DJ Key and DJ Afro and cultural manager Salah Malouli as well as many other informal conversations with rappers and rap fans, especially those attending rap concerts. Some of these interviews were not easy to get, particularly in the case of two important rappers Muslim and Mobydick, as they were resistant to the idea of being interviewed by a scholar. Therefore, spending time gaining the trust of rappers in Casablanca, Rabat or Meknes made it easier for me to access other rappers whose work is crucial to this thesis. Contacting other rappers by email or phone, specifically Fnaïre or Don Bigg, was not successful. In these cases, I used published interviews from newspapers or TV to broaden my analysis of these rappers' musical production. The informal interviews with consumers in rap concerts was done with both male and female audiences, mainly teenagers although not exclusively. Modes of rap music consumption also included during the fieldwork period following the

⁴¹ <http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/opinion/2012/06/2012626133253231919.html> [Accessed May 26, 2014] and <http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/opinion/2012/07/20127915147601338.html> [Accessed May 26, 2014].

responses and debates generated throughout this time on social media, specially on official Facebook pages of rappers who often interact with the audiences.

To conclude, this thesis' originality relies in the combination of theory, methodology and methods of research as it draws on interdisciplinary methods that use historical and cultural research to understand the dynamics of power and politics in postcolonial Morocco (Chapter One and Three); sociological and sociolinguistic studies to understand the complexities of urban youth culture (Chapter Two and Four); studies on popular music and the music market to examine the sociology of music (Chapter Five); and critical theory and critical discourse in the analysis of lyrics to show their complexity and locality. In addition to this interdisciplinary approach, two years of data collection and living in the field allowed me to collect crucial primary data on rap music, as well as meeting and interviewing diverse rappers and stakeholders in the field using my knowledge of standard Arabic, French and Darija. This work and experience in the field has allowed me to construct a unique research project that draws on theory and practice to expand and challenge the dominant perception of rap music and youth in Morocco.

Thesis structure

This thesis is divided into five chapters, each exploring different aspects of rap music in Morocco. The focus of Chapter One is the postcolonial construction and the re-imagination of the nation. It explores the role of rap music in shaping national identity, both in pushing boundaries as well as echoing the Makhzen's agenda. It presents the hegemonic construction of an Arab-Islamic national identity as designed by the nationalist urban elite during the struggle for independence. The chapter

claims that popular and everyday experiences are still embedded in the national narrative. This chapter introduces the work of the rap groups Fnaïre and H-Kayne, as well as rapper Don Bigg or members of the younger generation, such as Dizzy DROS and Shayfeen. In its focus on national identity, this chapter also considers the notion of Moroccanness within the global cultural flows and claims the pressure on Moroccan artists to show their national identity in their musical production. The political and aesthetic differences between these rappers' production provides evidence of how the nation continues to be a significant space of contention in defining the identity of Moroccan youth.

Chapter Two examines the complexities of rap music as an urban popular culture. It provides evidence of how cities constitute a space of empowerment for youth. The chapter specifically focuses on the different uses of urban language in order to fulfill particular agendas. While certain rappers consider swearing a tool to connect with urban youth, others choose to abandon swearwords in order to broaden their audience. It examines particularly how 'street' language and urban spaces are constructed as 'rebellious,' but also considers this language and spaces can be co-opted by the state. The case of Don Bigg allows us to provide evidence on how the popular neighborhood of Hay Mohammadi, associated with the rebellious music group Nass El Ghiwane authorizes the rapper to construct a narrative of resistance and obtain symbolic capital. However, this chapter also presents cases of how artists struggle to gain independence from the state. Ultimately, this chapter shows the fight over urban spaces as key to controlling Moroccan youth.

The idea of social control is further argued in Chapter Three. This chapter presents the cultural production of those rappers who focus on uncritical patriotic

lyrics and their constant use of national symbols such as the flag in their work. The chapter presents the case of rappers Fnaïre and H-Kayne who have built their career and gained economic capital from focusing their rap songs on patriotic lyrics. It therefore suggests that some rappers are the Makhzen's tools for social control because they endorse its agenda, particularly in times of unrest. However, the chapter also claims that in spite of the lure of economic profits, rappers such as Muslim and Mobydick openly denounce other rappers' uncritical love, pride in and defense of the country. For this reason, this chapter argues that the different actors in the rap scene acknowledge the use of rap as a vehicle to perpetuate the Makhzen's agenda, but also their agency to voice criticism in spite of the overwhelming power of the Makhzen in the cultural field.

Chapter Four takes a close look at the idea of opposition and dissent in the context of the Moroccan rap scene. It argues that rap helps some sections of the secular civil society to fulfill their own particular agenda aligning with the Makhzen and opposing the Islamists. The conception of the *Nayda* discourse is here deconstructed to argue for a more resilient and heterogeneous rap scene. The argument in this chapter is that in constructing a homogeneous music scene, some sections of secular civil society serves the Makhzen's agenda in silencing oppositional voices of rappers who are greatly influential among the Moroccan youth, as in the case of Muslim. This chapter also presents the case of rapper L7a9ed and the tension between activism, media and art which shows that some media has shaped cultural resistance by privileging social and political actions over music production. In this sense, even if rapper Muslim's music production engages with the unprivileged Moroccan urban youth, the media, the Makhzen and some sections of

the secular civil society disregard it due to his allegedly Islamist lyrics. Therefore, this chapter presents the interplay between the promotion and/or silencing of voices that do not conform to or fulfill different powerful political agendas.

Finally, Chapter Five examines the importance of rappers' creativity and artistic skills as a way to connect with Moroccan youth—mainly the urban and unprivileged but not exclusively—as a marginal social group. It argues that the use of a rebellious discourse by some rappers, as is the case of rapper Chaht Man, may lead to being trapped in cultural clichés without a significant impact on the urban youth. At the same time, it presents different narratives and artistic strategies some rappers use to connect with marginalized urban youth. It introduces Dizzy DROS search to artistically engage with the notion 'blackness' as a signifier of exclusion. Similarly, Mobydick uses the artistic persona of a marginal actor and bestows it with the fictional characteristics of US superheroes transforming marginal urban youth into an empowered group. This chapter provides evidence of the ways creative artistic strategies are a valuable tool to connect with Moroccan urban youth.

Chapter One: National Identity and Rap Music

The postcolonial dominant Moroccan national narrative constructed by Morocco's nationalist movement during its struggle for independence emerged as an essentialized and homogenized, progress-oriented account that was based on the assumption of cultural continuity (Burke 1998b, p.5). This notion of continuity is something common to the post-independence narratives of societies in the MENA region, as opposed to presenting the past according to historical ruptures (Bayat 2010, p.3). In the case of Morocco, Edmund Burke (1998b, p.11) has noted in particular that researchers⁴² have privileged the continuities of Moroccan society with its past and not its discontinuities. As Burke suggests, while researchers acknowledge change in what have come to be known as the precolonial, colonial, and postcolonial eras, they choose to highlight "cultural continuity, the persistence of segmentation, symbolic systems of legitimating and/or domination" (1998, p.8).

This chapter departs from Burke's argument, and takes as its object an investigation of the implications of the tendency that he identified. First laying out Moroccan narratives of national identity, this chapter begins to show how narratives do favor a monolithic and homogenized perception of cultural continuity. It goes on to suggest that in order to allow the complexities of Moroccan national identity to emerge, the nation must never be considered to be complete, but rather as something that is always in process (Hall 1990, p.222), being written, rewritten, and unwritten.

⁴² Burke specifically considers the works of John Waterbury, *Commander of the Faithful* (1970); Ernest Gellner, *Saints of Atlas* (1969), Elaine Combs-Schilling, *Sacred performances: Islam, Sexuality, and Sacrifice* (1989); and John P. Entelis, *Culture and Counterculture in Moroccan Politics* (1989). To Burke's example I add other works such as Elaine Combs-Schilling (1999), Benjamin Stora (2003); or Mohamed Daadaoui (2011) that have followed this progressive narrative in their depiction of Moroccan national identity.

This chapter examines the ways in which rappers shape and are shaped by narratives of the nation. It does so by considering hegemonic political narratives at the local level, as well as global cultural flows.⁴³ The particular mechanisms of identity in rap music allow youth to shape and aesthetically push the boundaries of national identity as well as local and global signifiers of Moroccaness. The nation thus remains a central trait of the country's youth identity, and while youth are able to shape their national identity, young Moroccans feel the pressure to include the nation – in whatever terms they choose to consider it – as a fundamental defining factor of their identity. In this chapter I argue that an internal political and social analysis is necessary to read the work of Moroccan rappers. However, the actual figuration of the national in their cultural production also responds to Morocco's position globally. The following consideration of the relevance of national identity in rap music reflects on findings that Moroccan rappers not only wish not express their identity to a Moroccan audience, but do highlight their Moroccaness when it comes to considering them as a part of global hip hop culture.

The first section of the chapter examines the nation as a cultural construction. It connects this notion to the context of colonialism, Moroccan nationalism, and the struggle for independence. It suggests the dominant postcolonial Moroccan identity has to a great extent been rigidly shaped by Moroccan nationalist urban elites. The second section establishes the importance of music and music genres in the construction of this hegemonic national identity. To construct a national identity in the postcolonial period, the Moroccan elite as patrons of culture promoted music genres like Andalusi, a lyrical and instrumental repertoire transmitted for centuries

⁴³ The notion of global flows is explained later in the chapter.

also known as *al āla* (Aydoun 2001, p.24), or Malhun, oral poetry in Darija usually involving percussion instruments (Howe 2005, p.189),⁴⁴ in order to reenact an ideal utopian precolonial narrative. In particular, Andalusí music can be found particularly in urban centers throughout North Africa⁴⁵ (Poché 1995; Guettat 2000; Shannon 2007, p.231; Langlois 2009, p.208). This music tradition has been bestowed with a refined character linked to the Moroccan elites as it is related to the golden age of Al Andalus (Aydoun 2001, pp.24–25; Langlois 2009, p.208).⁴⁶ Andalusí is especially connected to the Moroccan monarchy as King Hassan II was declared the honorary president of the Andalusian Music Amateurs Association and it was played during the celebration of the wedding of Mohammed VI in 2002 (Shannon 2007, p.325). Despite the relation of Andalusí music to Moroccan elites, this music allows Moroccan contemporary musicians to connect with their cultural heritage. Especially, *taqlidi* (traditional) rap (which mixes traditional Moroccan music and hip hop sounds) capitalizes on Andalusí and other music genres like Aissawa⁴⁷ to associate new contemporary music genres such as rap with the Moroccan culture. The aesthetics of *taqlidi* rap as a way of presenting alternatives to the official narrative of the nation is then examined in the third section. This section looks at the way rappers highlight Amazighity⁴⁸ or Africanness pushing the boundaries of

⁴⁴ Ahmed Aydoun (2001, pp.53–62) provides a complete account on the particularities of Malhun.

⁴⁵ Although Andalusí music is mainly found in North Africa, Jonathan H. Shannon (2007) evidences the performance of this music genre in contemporary Syria.

⁴⁶ Aydoun (2001, p.24) highlights the fact that the name Andalusí is inadequate as it overlooks the Moroccan contribution to the development of this music genre's repertoire. However, he continues to call it Andalusí due to the name's popularity and the historical attachments to Al Andalus in the genesis of this music genre (Ibid, p.25).

⁴⁷ Aissawa or Issawa is a Sufi brotherhood that employs creates music to bring their members to trance.

⁴⁸ I employ the term Amazighity or Amazighness to broadly refer to identity traits of the Amazigh identity including the group's language, customs and culture, and to Tamazigh as the languages spoken within the diverse Amazigh cultures (Elkouche 2013, p.5). However I acknowledge the particularities and differences of the various Amazigh identities within Morocco.

Moroccan national identity rigidly constructed by the nationalist movement as Arab-Muslim. The fourth and final section positions Moroccan rappers within cultural global flows to argue that while some artists feel the need to express their national identity, others resist the pressure to reproduce local and global signifiers of Moroccanness. It examines the phenomenon whereby some rappers feel the need to claim their Moroccanness through the aesthetics or lyrics, while others advocate for more diverse ways to shape their identity. Together, these sections provide evidence of the significant role of rap music in shaping national identity, which in turn show the profound rootedness of the national in the Moroccan cultural field.

1. (De)Constructing the Nation

The nation, as this section argues, is continually contested, negotiated and shaped through popular culture and everyday practices (Edensor 2002, p.1; Abu-Lughod 2005, p.26). Its resilience, that is, its ability to change shape and to quickly adapt, is behind the difficulty that scholars have found in crafting a singular definition of the nation (Smith 1998, p.221). Elias Canetti (1978, p.169) has explained that the problem in defining the nation is the scholarly determination to apply a single definition to all nations. One scholar, Lowell W. Barrington (2006), however, offers a comprehensive approach to defining the nation that is useful here as a starting point. For Barrington, nations are “collectives united by shared cultural features (such as language, myths, and values) and the belief in the right to territorial self-determination” (2006, p.7). He thus sees nations as grouped and distinguished according to these shared features, which are embodied in the territory the group believes belongs to them. Following Benedict Anderson’s *Imagined Communities* (1991, p.4), these shared cultural features are considered as culturally constructed

and the nation can be seen as a 'cultural artifact' or indeed a system of meaning. The nation is therefore in a constant process of renewal, which is experienced through everyday life (Finlayson 2007, p.112; Edensor 2002, p.17). Thus, a "sense of national identity then is not a once and for all thing, but is dynamic and dialogic, found in the constellations of a huge cultural matrix of images, ideas, spaces, things, discourses and practices" (Edensor 2002, p.17). Drawing on Gramsci, John Storey (2003, p.51) suggests that everyday experiences and popular culture are responsible for the nation's plasticity. In other words, nations are a complex phenomena embedded in the popular and everyday experiences constantly "written, unwritten, rewritten, but not as rigid units" (Schaebler 2007, p.179).

A main component of the Moroccan nation is marked by the centrality of its monarchy, whose relationship with the population is constructed and reinforced through the regular performance of state rituals. Researchers like M. Elaine Combs-Schilling (1999) and Mohamed Daadaoui (2011) argue that the performance of such rituals connect the monarchy to the people in order to create shared cultural features. In her article "Performing Monarchy, Staging the Nation" (1999), Combs-Schilling examines a series of ritual performances whereby music, festivities and the purity of the white robe establish not only the unity between the Moroccan monarchy and the people, but the king's centrality as sacred emblem of the nation. The article describes King al-Mansur's (1578-1603) ceremony where he staged a performance of the Birth of the Prophet in several parts of the country (Combs-Schilling 1999, p.180). The performance placed the king in front of his subjects as the symbol of the nation: "...the nation gathered in gazing at the central king, the material signifier of the whole, the nodal point of the festivities, and the emblem of the nation" (1999, p.181).

The songs, dance, the sounding of trumpets were combined with the sacred play that made use of both verbal and lighting so that the “people’s own bodies seemingly demonstrated the natural hierarchy... that elevates the white-robed ruler, the descendant of the Prophet, over all the rest as the best-of-case representative, the man par excellence” (1999, p.180). Combs-Schilling here suggests that the performances staged by the king contribute to legitimize his role by symbolizing national unity.

These performances are, of course, not the only example of state pageantry that puts focus on the king as a symbol of national unity. In 1934, *La Fête du Trône* was established as a Nationalist Day to celebrate the nation and to glorify the sultan, where calls of “Long Live the King” stated the significance of the monarchy (Sater 2010, pp.20–21). The festivities held by the king and the people allow the population to “experience itself as interwoven in a distinct political-cultural entity, a nation” (Combs-Schilling 1999, p.185). In other words, these ritual performances are a key tool for the Moroccan monarchy to build the imagined nation around the king. Mohamed Daadaoui (2011, p.54) also sees the king’s performance of power in front of the people as the monarchy’s strategy to build unity and retain the king as the legitimate spiritual leader of a civilian collective. The king is staged as a unifying symbol by a series of performances that Daadaoui (2011, p.1) calls rituals of power which he defines as the following four: the king’s *sharafa* (prophetic lineage), *baraka* (divine blessing), the *bay’a* or annual ceremony of allegiance, and his claim as *’amīr al-mu’minīn* (commander of the faithful). The *baraka*, *sharafa*, *bay’a* and *’amīr al-mu’minīn* constitute “a part of the historical authority of the Makhzen in its spiritual guise” (Daadaoui 2011, p.6). Reference to these attributes are performed in

ceremonies and spectacles to “aggrandize the regime and sanctify it in the national memory” (Daadaoui 2011, p.3). In this sense, the annual bay‘a or oath of allegiance establishes a renewal of the bond between the king and the people, which is in fact an oath of obedience to the king and a recognition of his authority as a national figure (Hammoudi 1997, p.13). Key is the fact that the ceremony is based on a consensus that must be consolidated: national divisions must be solved and obedience to the authority must be affirmed (Ibid). When diverse segments of the population pledge allegiance to the monarch, the king becomes a unifier of the nation, but also a leader and arbiter (Ibid, 19). Through these performances, the nation is reminded of the king’s authority and legitimacy, and of the centrality of the monarchy in the constitution of any definition of the nation.

Nevertheless, the construction of the Moroccan nation through these performances and rituals must be carefully contextualized. Castells (2009, p.31) has observed that the notion of ‘imagined communities’ is an unsatisfactory tool, saying that “ethnicity, religion, language, territory, per se, do not suffice to build nations, and induce nationalism” (2009, p.32). Rather, he suggests that scholars focus on questions such as how, from what, by whom, and for what a nation is constructed (2009, p.34). During the 1940s, Moroccan urban elites who would later form the Istiqlal Party (Independence Party) absorbed the different parties involved in resistance to the French and Spanish occupation and constructed a unified narrative of the Moroccan nation (Lawrence 2012, p.485). What resulted came to be the dominant nationalist narrative that presented the king as unifier and emblem of the nation (Stora 2003, p.16; Sater 2010, p.20; Stenner 2012, p.584). When the French rule was allowed to take over the country in 1912, however, the role of the king was

reduced to that of figurehead (Hammoudi 1997, p.15). Partly as a reaction to this, Remy Leveau (1997, p.105) has observed that the monarch's image as a national religious symbol was developed specifically as a unifying force, for example after the Rif uprising in 1925. The Rif Wars (1919-26) led by Abdelkrim Al Khattabi against the Spanish colonial power represent an attempt to establish the Republic of the Rif challenging the Moroccan monarchy (Howe 2005, p.66; Leveau 1997, p.105). In order to oppose the French and Spanish colonial rule, as well as to prevent regional leaders to challenge the monarch's legitimacy and hegemonic power, the king's role as spiritual leader was enhanced as part of the elite agenda to gain the power. During nationalist demonstrations against colonial rule, protesters constructed power and legitimacy in opposition to the colonizers, holding banners declaring: "‘Long live Islam!’ ‘Long live Morocco!’ ‘Long live the Sultan!’" (Geertz cited in Entelis 1989, p.57). This linked the king, religion, and nationalism in a way that would carry through in the following years. In 1947, Sultan Mohammed V made public his alignment with the nationalist leaders, saying the move was necessary in order to ensure "the re-establishment of an independent Moroccan state" (Sater 2010, p.21). This step allowed the king to recover his popularity by aligning himself with the struggle of the people, and at the same time strengthened his position (Stenner 2012, p.589). Back from his exile (1953-1956), the king was welcomed home as the hero of independence, but also a figure who possessed baraka or prophetic charisma (Hammoudi 1997, p.18; Daadaoui 2011, p.46). Then, in the first years of independence, the Istiqlal Party supported the king in turn (Hammoudi 1997, p.18).

Despite examples that make use of rituals of power, the theories of Combs-Schilling and Daadaoui are frail, since they take as an assumption the dominance of

the monarchy over the people and fail to consider the people's agency in the process of nation building. In other words, both researchers consider the Moroccan nation as a product of an 'Alawite – that is, the ruling dynasty – master plan. The work of Hammoudi (1997, p.25) and Sater (2010, p.44), however, has shown that the power of the monarchy's rituals is not always successful in establishing unifying narratives. While Daadaoui (2011, p.7) argues that the sharafa, together with the monarch's claim as 'amīr al-mu'minīn, perpetuates the king as benefactor, Sater suggests that the sharafa can also be used to grant legitimacy to other rival groups that have the same claim of belonging to the prophetic lineage (Sater 2010, p.44). Moreover, when Abdelkrim al Khattabi founded the Republic of the Rif in the north of the country without any reference to the prophetic lineage, the idea that it was a necessary part of national consciousness was debunked (Hammoudi 1997, p.15). As Hammoudi explains: "The idea that sharafism [the prophetic lineage] is the foundation of the Moroccan nation and is responsible for its continuity since the eighth century is, however, a recent point of view, which may, incidentally, contradict the scholarly theory of allegiance" (Ibid, p.14). Traditional legitimacy, Hammoudi (1997, p.25) argues, is what would remain in the minds of people when the monarch is able to defeat enemies or accomplish other feats in the name of the nation. At the same time, he notes that in times of crisis, religious titles are not something that matter in the minds of the people (Ibid). However, the several coup d'état that King Hassan II survived at the beginning of the 1970s weakens Hammoudi's argument. On the one hand, the fact that the life of the king was threatened is a proof of the frailty of the monarchy's rituals of power. However, after surviving two threats against his life, Hassan II was seen as a miracle, a sentiment which fed back into notions of his

baraka and sharafa and to his position as a national and unifying icon (Sater 2010, p.45; Willis & Maarouf 2010, p.7). Though Daadaoui considers these “isolated incidents of political unrest” (2011, p.98), the coups against Hassan II caused a crisis in the king’s domestic policy (Sater 2010, p.125). The strength of these rituals of power, therefore, must be analyzed within further political, social and historical context.

In considering the king’s legitimacy and national unity, we must take into account the role of certain historical events – namely the Green March – after the period of crisis stirred up by the coups. In October 1975, Hassan II called 350,000 volunteers to participate in a peaceful march across the border into the Western Sahara region occupied by Spain since 1884 (Daadaoui 2008, p.148). Then, on November 6, Moroccan men and women entered the area of the Spanish Colony armed with copies of the Quran, Moroccan flags, and pictures of the King Hassan II (Sater 2010, p.126; Storm 2007, p.39). In 1976, Spain withdrew from the territory, allowing the king to claim a victory. The Western Sahara did not prove such a simple region, however. By February that same year, the Saharawi nationalist movement for independence lead by the Frente Polisario had declared the birth of the Saharawi Arab Democratic Republic (SADR) (San Martin 2007, pp.565–566). At the same time, Morocco organized an oath of allegiance in the region’s city of Layoune to claim the territory as Moroccan (Sater 2010, p.126). The conflict intensified when part of the region’s inhabitants fled into refugee camps in the western Algeria region of Tindouf to protect themselves from the armed conflict (San Martin 2007, p.267). Morocco considered Algeria’s support of Polisario a sign that it was responsible for the existence of the independence movement in the Western Sahara (Sater 2010,

p.128). The next years saw intense armed and diplomatic campaigns, and a dispute that remains until today between Moroccan authorities, who claim rights over the region as part of precolonial Morocco, and the Polisario, which claims the right for self-determination.

The Saharawi nationalist project that emerged during the 1970s questioned the validity of the rituals of power in maintaining the unity of the nation, even if official Moroccan sources tended to depoliticize the issue by blaming the Sahara conflict on economic problems (Maghraoui 2002, p.26; San Martin 2007, pp.581–583). The fact that there was (and is) such a crisis within the Sahara region under Moroccan control, not only questions the nature of hegemonic political system, but also the monarchy and its ability to claim national unity (San Martin 2007, p.583). As a signifier of Moroccan nationalism and patriotism, that is, feelings of love and pride for the nation, conquering territory conceived as part of the ‘homeland’ was essential to the nationalist ideology and was discussed in some quarters with a sense of national pride: “Whatever else others outside of Morocco may think of this policy or the diplomatic defeats associated with it, the Western Sahara issue has galvanized nationalist pride and identity like anything else since independence” (Entelis 1989, p.59). The Western Sahara’s ‘reintegration’ to Morocco’s territory has been a symbolic concern that has reinforced the relationship between the monarchy and Moroccans (Daadaoui 2011, p.105; Entelis 1989, p.59). The ‘Green March’ showed the king as a defender of the nation’s interests (Sater 2010, p.39) and has taken its place in the nation’s collective memory. In official annals, it has been represented as a watershed in Moroccan history and used to show the consolidation and legitimacy of the monarchy as defender of national unity and provider of political stability

(Maghraoui 2002, p.29). As Sater argues, “[f]inding financial, political, and military support for its Western Sahara campaign has been the Kingdom’s main priority, as this issue proved to be crucial for the consolidation of King’s Hassan II’s power” (2010, p.11). The success of the march into the Sahara, attributed entirely to King Hassan II, combined with electoral processes allowing for limited electoral participation granted the king to gain the necessary legitimacy for ending years of battles with opposition parties (Hammoudi 1997, p.20; Sater 2010, p.42). The Sahara Issue has thus supported hegemonic narratives exploited by the Makhzen, who have stressed the need for Moroccan unity under the leadership of the king.

The Sahara events also confirms that the formation of a nation is part of a complex process that includes rituals of power, but also the power’s capitalization on historical events that remain in the collective memory and not a single event. Connor (1990, p.99) argues that there is a tendency to fix the construction of the nation and nationalist movements at a particular point in time. In Morocco, for example, historians established the protest against the Berber Dahir or edict in 1930 as the beginning of the Moroccan nationalist movement (Hammoudi 1997, p.15; Stora 2003, p.21; Zisenwine 2010, p.10). This was also the era of the free schools movement at the end of the 1920s, which saw stress put on the integration of Islamic studies and Arabic language study in government schooling (Halstead 1967, p.161; Sater 2010, p.20).⁴⁹ Within this framework, previous actions carried out by the elites and popular demonstrations during the 1930s are often referred to as ‘proto-nationalist’ period (Burke 1998b, p.6; Stora 2003, p.21; Lawrence 2012, p.475). As

⁴⁹ Halstead (1967) offers a developed description on the purpose of the free schools that he considers part of the Moroccan Salafiyya agenda to rejuvenate Morocco and the embryo of Moroccan nationalism. As Halstead states, one of the aims of this schools was “to counteract the denigration of Moroccan history as taught in the government schools” (1967, p. 163).

Lawrence (2012, p.475) observes, the same impulse that fixes national identity based on a particular moment discloses the fact that all the demands for reforms that emerged during French rule were gathered into a unique nationalist narrative. Thus, the nationalist narrative that presents the king as the symbol of unity absorbed a number of different and not necessarily aligned voices, which are then presented as a united nationalist agenda that took shape at a single point in time.

In this sense, Burke (1998) and Lawrence (2012) highlight the fact that the Moroccan nationalist narrative absorbed the divergent voices of the precolonial and colonial era into the Makhzen's master narrative, and rarely admit other groups as actors. Lawrence (2012, p.485) argues that researchers (for example Stora 2003) have paid more attention to the Moroccan nationalist movement's leadership, and have focused less on understanding the mechanisms through which the rest of the population became involved in the movement. As Lawrence claims, many studies "fail to consider the ways in which the development of national consciousness takes continual work and may not grow in a natural or obvious way" (2012, p.479).⁵⁰ Combs-Schilling's article becomes a useful tool here, as it explains the idea that national consolidation occurs only when monarchy has access to "peripheral people, discourses and symbols" (1999, p.186). She says these rituals are important only when the people recognize the authority of the king, so that the performances dictate the terms of recognition that eventually are taken up as true. What this stresses, is that the king as well as the nationalist movements cannot survive without the support of the masses (Barrington 2006, p.22; Connor 1990, p.95). It is only when these

⁵⁰ Lawrence (2012) points to Zade's doctoral thesis, *Résistance et Armée de Libération au Maroc (1947-1956): De l'action politique à la lutte armée: rupture ou continuité* (2001) for an account on the tendency of Moroccan scholarship to portray Moroccan history as a series of successive victories.

movements achieve the people's support that nationalist programs become meaningful (Forrest 2006, p.40). As Connor argues (1990, pp.98–99), although it is only recently that the nationalist elites consider the masses as part of the nation, national consciousness requires a sufficient percentage of population to internalize the national identity in order for the nation to become a force that mobilizes the masses (Ibid, p. 99). Therefore, the elites of the nationalist movement are required to negotiate with the masses the terms of the nation building in order to win their support.

Though the people are an essential element in the construction of national identity, the power of the elites or upper classes in constructing hegemonic national discourses into which the voices of the people can be subsumed, must be taken into account (Connor 1990; Barrington 2006; Forrest 2006). Despite the need for popular support, the elites are often the main actors in shaping social and political discourses, and 'imagine' cultural features to unite the masses (Schaebler 2007, p.179; Barrington 2006, p.13). It is important to recognize, however, that history written by a nationalist's impulse remains a narrative written by a privileged urban elite even if it claims to speak in the name of the people (Burke 1998, p.5). This elite is a powerful agent in negotiating the nation, and it is within this space of negotiation that focus might be put, the space where nations are remembered and forgotten: "Every nation must have its history, its own collective memory. This remembering is simultaneously a collective forgetting" (Billig 1995, p.38). In the process of remembering, therefore, the collective memory forgets or marginalizes identities that are not favoured by the elites as was the case of Amazighity in the initial years of postcolonial Morocco. Indeed, it is within these spaces that elites, organizations,

intellectuals and political movements fight to impose the cultural features that they ought to be remembered and become part of the national identity (Billig 1995, p.27; Schaebler 2007, p.179). In other words, despite the fact the nation is resilient, the elite has the power to include certain features in the collective memory and overlook others. In the case of Morocco, the nationalist movement whose leaders belong to the country's urban elites favored cultural traits such as Islam and Arabness, but overlooked other diverse identities such as Amazighity (favored by the French rule). Islam, Arabness and the Moroccan nation became the official expression of Moroccan identity with the king as the symbol of both national and territorial unity, as researchers such as Entelis (1989), Stora (2003) and Sater (2010) have shown.

This connection between Moroccan nationhood, Arabism and Islam is referred to in *Culture and Counterculture in Moroccan Politics* (1989, p.4) by Entelis as the 'Muslim consensus.' While not a set of instructions that aim at transforming principles into practice, the consensus is rather a set of beliefs at the core of Moroccan national identity (1989, p.50). In other words, the main components of Moroccan identity for the nationalists were formulated as explicit ideologies and a system of beliefs, not as "a description of society and a program of political action" (Daadaoui 2011, p.99). This system "enables the monarchy to build a common group feeling, a cultural synthesis comprising religious, nationalistic and secular strands" (Daadaoui 2011, p.80). Both Daadaoui (2011, p.80) and Entelis (1989, p.56) hold that the monarchy has been able to skillfully promote religious and traditional symbols with which the majority of Moroccans relate and identify. Therefore, Islam, Arabism and Moroccan nationalism remain for the masses "the overwhelming bases of individual and local as well as collective identity" (Entelis

1989, p.6). This collective identity is embodied by the words *Allah, El Watan, El Malik* (God, the Nation, the King) present in the Moroccan national anthem and in the Article 4 in the 2011 Constitution: “The emblem of the Kingdom is the red flag with a green five-pointed star in the middle. The motto of the Kingdom is GOD, THE NATION, THE KING.”⁵¹ This motto represents the traits that unite the Moroccan nation in their relationship with the monarch as the religious leader. Through this narrative, the Moroccan state headed by the administration of the Makhzen is able to establish the legitimacy of the monarchy, and see its line of legitimacy as having been broken by French and Spanish rule.

Despite the state’s disregard for other traits in the Moroccan identity, these may emerge in cultural forms as elites are also constrained by other social and political influences (for example, certain religious values, traditions, languages) in building the nation (Forrest 2006, p.41). The next section analyses rap music as a space where the complexity of the Moroccan national identity emerges. It presents the Moroccan rap group Fnaïre which draws on Moroccan music genres to reshape contemporary national popular music. While in their lyrics Fnaïre perpetuates the hegemony of the Moroccan monarchy and reflect national identity as imagined by the Makhzen, they also highlight the diversity of the Moroccan nation beyond the Arab-Muslim identity. Therefore, the next section engages with the idea that through rap Moroccan youth are able to negotiate their national identity with the Makhzen and demonstrate that despite the power of the elites, national identity cannot be

⁵¹ <http://www.maroc.ma/en/content/constitution> and <http://www.maroc.ma/NR/rdonlyres/2298ADD6703C471EB924A5E4F396FEA2/0/Texteint%C3%A9gralduprojetdenouvelleConstitution.pdf> [Accessed May 5, 2014].

detached from popular culture and needs to be negotiated beyond the power's purposes.

2. Shaping National Popular Music

National identities and nationalist ideologies play an important role in the formation and articulation of musical practices (Biddle & Knights 2007, p.9; Nooshin 2009, p.3; Bohlman 2010). In the postcolonial cultural sphere, the Makhzen has established itself as the major cultural patron, funding and spearheading important cultural associations (Graïouid & Belghazi 2013, p.269). As cultural patrons, the state capitalizes on music to promote its hegemonic idea of the nation. After independence, state-controlled radio and television promoted its particular ideology through the direct patronage of composers and performers, a tendency that extends to rap music today. Elites favored contemporary Arabic music, a music genre based on Egyptian popular songs (Callen 2006, p.32). Through such sponsorship the state shaped and promoted the 'nation' as a one of the main signifiers of identity in Morocco. Behind the Makhzen's effort to control the music scene is the notion that music not only serves as a tool for social control, but it also plays an important role in building and shaping identities (Folkestad 2002, p.151; Bohlman 2010, p.58).

The concern for national music in Morocco began during the colonial period (1912-1956) when French Rule established the *Laboratoire de Musique Marocaine* for musicological research (Baldassarre 2003, p.80). The main interest of the center was to focus on Amazigh musical tradition, all while disregarding the Arab music that was at the time popular among the Moroccan ruling class (Baldassarre 2003, pp.80-81). The project was framed within the French policy of 'divide and rule'

(Elkouche 2013, p.11). Once independence was achieved in 1956, the Moroccan popular music scene was dominated by oriental Arab, patriotic, nationalist music (Mubarak cited in Fernández Parrilla & Islán Fernández 2009, p.153). Singers like Bouchaib El Bidaoui or Houcine Slaoui⁵² became the pioneers of Moroccan modern popular music, focusing on genres such as ‘Aïta⁵³ or Malhun (Baldassarre 2003, p.83). Moroccan nationalist movement favored music genres of Moroccan origin, specially the Nuba Istihlāl, a musical form of Moroccan Andalusí music, which was dedicated to express feelings towards independence. Artists were encouraged to dedicate their songs to patriotic concerns, and developing a style called *ughniya wataniya* (patriotic song) (Baldassarre 2003, p.82; Callen 2006, p.33). In the case of Morocco and Palestine, in particular, patriotic songs were based on the national folkloric model that was also characteristic of countries in the Soviet Bloc (Baldassarre 2003, p.83; Massad 2005, p.179). Thematically, post-colonial patriotic songs in Morocco are similar to those in Egypt, Lebanon or Palestine, which produced the patriotic songs played by Umm Kulthum and Fairuz.⁵⁴ Within the MENA region, Umm Kulthum and Fairuz’ songs sparked feelings of attachment to the nation (See for example Zirbel 2000; Massad 2005; Stone 2007; Lohman 2009). Umm Kulthum’s role in developing an Egyptian national consciousness, unity and pride has been recognized as especially important (Zirbel 2000, p.124; Lohman 2009). The nation remains a recurrent theme in contemporary Moroccan music, however, the aesthetics of the music has changed since the initial promotion of

⁵² <http://www.zamane.ma/houcine-slaoui-le-chaabi-crooner/> [Accessed May 5, 2014].

⁵³ ‘Aïta is a popular music genre particularly practiced in the Atlantic region along the coast of Casablanca to the southern town of Asfí. Sung by men and women, ‘Aïtas generally start with an invocation to God and the saints (Aydoun 2001, p.108).

⁵⁴ Patriotic songs refer here to songs that express love and pride for the nation. Chapter Three of this thesis further explores patriotism and music in Morocco, arguing the continual promotion by the Makhzen of rappers that engage in patriotic themes.

Arabic and Moroccan traditional genres in the era after independence. In the Maghreb region, the theme of the *bled* (the country) is not only found in Andalusí and contemporary music inspired by Egyptian music, but in popular music genres like *rai*, originated in Algeria, *cha‘abi* which translated as “popular,” Moroccan *fusion*⁵⁵ and rap. For example the Algerian singer Souad Massi, the Algerian *rai* singers like Cheb Khaled or Cheb Mami, the Moroccan *cha‘abi* singer Daoudi each have songs called “Bladi” (My Country). Particularly in Moroccan rap, this trend extends to rappers such as Don Bigg, H-Kayne, Casa System or L7a9ed whose songs titled “Bladi” confirm the continuous focus of the nation in Morocco’s popular music.

In particular, the emergence of Moroccan fusion music during the 1970s aimed at creatively broadening and reimagining the boundaries of national popular music (Callen 2006, p.7). This new genre on the Moroccan music scene blended Moroccan traditional popular music genres with a variety of international genres like rock (Callen 2006, p.4). The Moroccan group Nass El Ghiwane played a main role in shaping the genre fusion and greatly influenced music in the country, becoming a pillar of Moroccan contemporary culture (Aadnani 2006, p.25). Nass El Ghiwane emerged from an artistic event in Essaouira in 1969, where musicians like Brian Jones from the Rolling Stones or Jimi Hendrix established links with Moroccan musicians, and connected with Moroccan music genres such as Gnawa⁵⁶ (Baldassarre 2003, p.86). The group members coming from the poor neighborhood

⁵⁵ Moroccan fusion music blends Moroccan traditional popular music genres with a variety of foreign genres like rock (Callen 2006, p.4).

⁵⁶ Gnawa musicians are Muslims, sometimes described as Sufi due to their similar organizational practices, who claim Sidi Bilal el Habashi as a patron saint (Bentahar 2010, 42). Although their origins are uncertain Gnawa is rooted in sub-Saharan Africa arriving to Morocco through the trans-Saharan trade (For a detailed analysis on Gnawa origins see El Hamel 2008).

of Hay Mohammadi in Casablanca, embodied a new generation of politically engaged youth that emerged in Morocco, influenced by the Vietnam War, the Chinese Cultural Revolution, the Argentinean revolutionary Che Guevara, the Arab-Israel War in 1967 (Fernández Parrilla & Islán Fernández 2009, p.151).⁵⁷ The group reused traditional Moroccan stories from the *halqa*⁵⁸ to quatrains from the Moroccan Sufi poet Sidi Abderrahman el Majdoub, significant due to the fact that they were all performed in Darija (Callen 2006, p.99; Fernández Parrilla & Islán Fernández 2009, p.152). Despite the links with foreign groups, Nass El Ghiwane and fusion music remained rooted in the Moroccan tradition not only because of their lyrics and use of Darija, but because they based their repertoire on the musical instruments and music genres of a diversity of regions in Morocco (Callen 2006, p.5).⁵⁹ The aesthetics of fusion music have surfaced more recently in groups such as Hoba Hoba Spirit, Darga or Mazagan, as well as the rap crew Fnaïre, which formed in Marrakech at the beginning of the 2000s with a particular rap style that they called taqlidi rap (traditional rap), which mixes rap beats inspired by Moroccan traditional music.

Taqlidi rap music is to Fnaïre a chance to link past and present employing the national patrimony. Fnaïre claims that their music is a product of their *tourate* (*tourath* in Classical Arabic, meaning legacy or heritage),⁶⁰ but at the same time, Fnaïre follows the aim of fusion music to ‘modernize’ Moroccan music. Musically, this blend of rap and traditional music aims at appealing to young people tired of

⁵⁷ Other independent and renowned personalities in politics and culture belong to this neighborhood (Fernández Parrilla & Islán Fernández 2009, p.151).

⁵⁸ Halqa (circle) is a performance in a public space which includes music, dance, storytellers, fortune-tellers (Callen 2006, p.53).

⁵⁹ Chapter Two discusses the influence of Nass El Ghiwane on the Moroccan rap scene. Section three here argues that rapper Don Bigg capitalizes on the rebellious image of Nass El Ghiwane and their popular background to construct their cultural production as revolutionary.

⁶⁰ <http://www.fnairemusic.com/> [Accessed May 5, 2014].

traditional Moroccan genres, as the group has mentioned: “Through rap or hip hop we want to modernize Moroccan song, which has started to show its age and seems to be of little interest to young people” (Mouhssine 2007). Although only Fnaïre refers to their cultural production as taqlidi rap, other rap crews such as DJ Van or H-Kayne deploy a similar narrative in their music production. DJ Van, producer of many of Fnaïre and H-Kayne songs, released after the death of the well-known Amazigh musician Mohamed Rouicha a remix of Rouicha’s song “Inass Inass (Tribute to Rouicha)”⁶¹ (2012). This song was the first step towards an album released in 2013 called *Moroccan Touch* consisting in eleven songs, all covers and remixes of Moroccan traditional music. In this album, Moroccan traditional songs are remixed with techno sounds to market the tracks as ‘modern’ interpretations of Morocco’s cultural heritage. The press release published on Hit Radio’s website on the occasion of the album’s release claims at the end in English “The world is ready for... THE MOROCCAN TOUCH.”⁶² The use of English denotes the aim of DJ Van to export this new trend in Moroccan contemporary music. In a recent interview to a new online Moroccan magazine DJ Van claimed that the purpose of the album is to globalize Moroccan musical heritage:

My goal has always been to globalize our rich musical heritage, which is our identity! So why not represent it to this new generation and international public on a new modern base. The album is scheduled for an international release by end of January, an

⁶¹ <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0OAKWGwBYfk> [Accessed February 5, 2014]; For the original song performed by Mohamed Rouicha see <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mjHk6ODuxyk> [Accessed February 5, 2014].

⁶² <http://www.hitradio.ma/radio/agenda/2013/10/11/dortie-de-lalbum-moroccan-touch-signe-dj-van-10-oc/> [Accessed February 5, 2014].

opportunity to internationalize the Moroccan Touch. (*Maghreb Movement Magazine*, February 2014)⁶³

The DJ production seeks to capitalize on Moroccan traditional music to market the nation as a ‘cool’ brand. Fusion and hip hop culture, which includes taqlidi rap and DJ Van’s music respond to the same impulse of reshaping Moroccan popular culture, connecting to the country’s heritage as well as branding the country as a ‘modern’ nation.

The emergence of taqlidi rap fits in well with the state’s official narrative whereby Morocco the new King Mohammed VI brought winds of change to the country (Linn 2011; Errihani 2013, p.5; Laachir 2013b, p.57). On the one hand, taqlidi rap music echoes the *in vogue* hegemonic narratives of change of ‘modernity,’ and on the other hand, although is a rap music genre, the fact that it is based on Moroccan traditional narrative bolsters the Makhzen’s own narrative on the nation. As a state discourse, symbols and language of modernity are displayed in strategic doses to maintain a balance between the king’s legitimacy, based in heritage, and the desire to portray a modern image of the kingdom:

From the state’s point of view, too much reference to modernity might imply, on the one hand, a willingness to renounce the heritage of legitimacy, causing an outcry among those who defend that heritage, on the other hand, too small dose would open the way for a militant defense of modernization. (Bourqia 1999, p.251)

This balance suggested by Bourqia was already introduced by King Mohammed VI in his first speech from the throne (Pieprzak 2003, p.143). As King Mohammed VI said on July 30, 1999:

⁶³ <http://maghrebmovement.com/maghreb-mouvement-magazine/> [Accessed February 10, 2014].

We hope that Morocco, under our reign, moves forwards on the path of development and modernity, and that enters the third millennium with a vision of future in perfect coexistence and mutual understanding with our partners preserving its identity and specificity, without isolating in themselves, as part of a reconfirmed authenticity and modernity which hardly deny our sacred values.⁶⁴

While the monarchy uses traditional symbols to legitimize its leadership – as the first section of this chapter laid out – it also adopts the language of ‘reform,’ ‘change,’ ‘transition,’ ‘modernizations,’ and ‘democratization’ (Joffé 2009, pp.151–152; Sater 2010, p.84). This language reflected in official rhetoric also materializes in a study carried out under the auspices of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) titled “50 Years of Human Development & Perspectives to 2025: The Future is being built and the best is possible” (2005), which reenacts in the introduction the hegemonic narrative of King Mohammed VI. The report starts by portraying a new image of Morocco as a nation undergoing democratic changes under the authority of the new king:

The accession of His Majesty King Mohammed VI to power is emblematic of a new pace towards liberation of Moroccan human potential: a democratic and modern societal project is clearly formulated and promoted, and a new concept of authority defined. (UNDP 2005, p.13)

In both examples, discourses on modernity are reinforced by placing King Mohammed VI as the leader of the country’s transition to democracy (Cohen & Jaidi 2006, p.1). In this sense, the narrative of taqlidi rap not only resonates with the state’s official discourse on the nation, but supports the king’s central role as leader

⁶⁴ <http://www.maroc.ma/fr/discours-royaux/discours-du-tr%C3%B4ne-de-sa-majest%C3%A9-le-roi-mohammed-vi> [Accessed February 20, 2014].

of the nation. Taqlidi resonates with the traditional side of the monarchy and rap with the idea of ‘modernity’ a combination also favoured by the world music market as discussed in the first section of Chapter 5.

Narratives that claim to aesthetically reproduce tradition and modernity emerge in the first song and video clip hits of Fnaïre and H-Kayne. Fnaïre’s song “Matkich Bladi”⁶⁵ (Don’t Touch My Country) (2004) draws on the 2003 Casablanca terrorist attacks to reenact patriotic lyrics in defense of the country.⁶⁶ H-Kayne’s theme in “Issawa Style”⁶⁷ (2006) engages youth and asks them to become involved and react, a leitmotif employed by the group in their lyrics to set Moroccan youth in motion. The video clips of both songs employ visual elements in order to combine symbols of their Moroccan identity with references to hip hop culture. Both video clips show rappers attired in over-sized hip hop style clothes emblazoned with references to the US with insignias such as “Brooklyn” or “Lakers,” as well as caps, black nets on their heads, and XXL coats. At the same time, these video clips exhibit shots that reenact signifiers of Moroccan identity. In the case of Fnaïre, the video clip takes place in the old medina and walls of Marrakech where the crew performs wearing t-shirts with the their band name written in Arabic. In the case of H-Kayne, the video clip of the song “Issawa Style” shows the group performing on the stage of a theatre wearing Moroccan djellabas while rapping in front of an Aissawa music ensemble.⁶⁸

⁶⁵ http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F0tKoJ_3GtE [Accessed February 20, 2014].

⁶⁶ The implications of the 2003 terrorist attacks in Casablanca and the song “Matkich Bladi” are further analyzed in the first section of Chapter Three.

⁶⁷ <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8TRhCRUvjR0> [Accessed February 20, 2014].

⁶⁸ During the time I spent with H-Kayne during my fieldwork in 2011 and 2013, the group did not openly identify with this Sufi brotherhood or Sufism.

The song “Issawa Style” also confirmed to be useful to the Makhzen agenda of sponsoring some Sufi groups to limit the rise of political Islam’s influence in the country. The Aissawa, a Sufi brotherhood originally – as well as H-Kayne – from Meknes, host every year in this city the most important *moussem* or festival during the Birth of the Prophet celebrations (Aydoun 2001, p.131). The song belongs to the group’s second and most known album *HK 1426*. In the title of the album H-Kayne makes use of the Muslim calendar year 1426 – equivalent to 2006 of the Gregorian calendar – as a reference of the rapper’s Muslim identity. Islam, as suggested by Daadaoui, is the strongest determinant of identity for Moroccans because it “transcends and suffuses national identity” (2011, p.80). The song, however, also highlights national identity by claiming that H-Kayne’s rap is “*mya flmya mghribia*” (100% Moroccan) and “*vert et rouge*” (green and red), reproducing the colors of the Moroccan flag. With this in mind, the promotion of Sufism in the video and songs serves to fulfill the Makhzen’s aim to curb the influence of political Islam such as the movement of Justice and Charity (*al ‘Adl wa al Ihasān*) and Salafī movements. Salafism is an Islamic reform movements inspired by the thinkers Jamal al Afghani and Muhammad Abduh who introduced after the World War I the Salafī message of Islamic modernism and anticolonialism to North African students including Allal El Fassi leader of the Moroccan nationalist movement (Howe 2005, p.67; Tozy 2009, p.23; Joffé 2011, p.120).⁶⁹ The advance of Salafism in Morocco caused a decline in the number of visitors to the Sufi brotherhoods (Addi 2009, p.339; Aboullouz 2011, p.174), as Salafī intellectuals condemned views of Islam as established by *zawiyas* or

⁶⁹ Thought Salafism is sometimes described as a radical and violent jihadi movement (See for example Daadaoui 2011, p.79) this trend only depicts some sections within Salafism that are normally referred to as Salafiyya Jihadiyya or Salafī-jihadists. See Mohamed Tozy (2009) and Abdelhakim Aboullouz (2011) for an account on Salafism in Morocco.

Sufi lodges, *ulema*⁷⁰ and mystics (Rachik 2009, p.350; Daadaoui 2011, p.82). More importantly, the Justice and Charity group as well as Salafism, both popular among the poor masses, openly oppose the monarchy and challenge the current political system becoming an important threat to the king and Makhzen (Cavatorta 2006, pp.213, 217; Storm 2007, p.110; Addi 2009, p.341; Daadaoui 2011, p.109). The Justice and Charity group has been able to gather large popular support in universities and within the shantytowns of the main cities in Tangiers, Rabat, Marrakech and Casablanca (Daadaoui 2011, p.131).

The Makhzen's struggle against these groups surfaces in how the state has favored major Sufi groups such as Tariqa Boutchichi. Abdelilah Bousria (2013, p.47) makes the case that King Mohammed VI's first official visit to the tomb of Moulay Idris, considered the first Arab Muslim king of Morocco, was a significant move toward ingratiating him to Sufi groups. The historical connection between Sufism and the Makhzen places the ulema and the Sufi lodges, as "instrumental in propagating the sultanistic power in society" (Daadaoui 2011, p.42). Although Sufism continues to have a folkloric spiritual role (Ibid, p.81), the religious authority of different Moroccan dynasties has come from their association with this zawiyas (Ibid, p.49). The aim to weaken political Islam is shared by social, ethnic and religious groups that also call for the king to act as the religious head in Morocco to control what they perceive as the threat of Islamism (Smith & Loudiy 2005, p.1107). Certain Sufi orders –for example the Tariqa Boutchichi– have thus become one of the Makhzen's tools to promote the Moroccan 'exception'⁷¹ and counter political Islam (Maghraoui 2009, p.206; Bouasria 2013, p.45). In 2002, Mohammed VI

⁷⁰ Ulema refers to Muslim legal scholars.

⁷¹ Section two of Chapter Three dwells further on the idea of exceptionalism in Morocco.

appointed Ahmed Taoufiq, a well-known member of the Boutchichiya Brotherhood as minister of Islamic affairs (Maghraoui 2009, p.206; Daadaoui 2011, p.185; Bouasria 2013, p.47), confirming the Makhzen aim of favoring this Sufi order to resist the advance of the Justice and Charity group. In turn, the Boutchichiya Brotherhood actively demonstrated its support for the Makhzen's campaign calling for a 'yes' vote for the new constitution in 2011 voicing the official message through the imam's *khutbas* (sermon) all around Morocco (Féernandez Molina 2011, p.440).

The preference for cultural production that makes use of Sufism is clear not only in Morocco beyond the national borders of the country. Within the Moroccan public sphere, the messages of peace and love associated to Sufism are employed by the government to depoliticize religious language (Maghraoui 2009, p.206). This message is transmitted every year in the *Fez Festival of World Sacred Music*, which capitalizes on the city's sanctuary of Moulay Idris, the founder of Fez and of the Moroccan state in the 8th century. The aim is that by making reference to this figure, a message of peace, piety, tolerance and peaceful co-existence will be transmitted (Belghazi 2006, p.102). The festivals' capitalization on the sacred medieval period of Al Andalus bestows on it a historical legitimacy (Ibid, p.106). Furthermore, the fact that a member of the royal family attends the opening concert of the festival each year manifests the aim to associate the monarchy with the message of tolerance and historical legitimacy (Ibid). Other countries like France, also exploit the depoliticized messages of love and peace embodied in Sufism for political control of rap music as Hicham Aidi (2011, pp.35–36) shows. While the French government systematically promoted to the Sufi rapper Abd Al Malik, it neglects rapper Médine who deploys a strong political discourse denouncing social exclusion and proclaiming the need to

protest (Ibid). While Abd Al Malik receives official recognition from the Ministry of Culture, Médine is ignored in the mainstream media (Ibid).⁷² This sort of phenomenon is discussed in the book *Rebel Music*, where its author Aidi (2014, p.xxvii) argues that the promotion of Sufism is a strategy used to counter Salafism. This is a similar claim to Maghraoui's (2009, pp.206–207) who says that the appointment of Ahmed Taoufiq as the Moroccan minister of Islamic affairs was likewise an attempt to counter Salafism, as he substituted Abdelkebir Alaoui Mdaghri, a figure considered to be close to the Salafis. Therefore, while the use of Aissawa music style and rhythms allows H-Kayne to exhibit the 'Moroccanness' of the group's cultural production, it also supports the Makhzen's fight against political opponents that threaten the hegemony of the king and participates in the idea of Morocco exporting a religiosity that is tolerant and flexible embedded in the notion of Morocco's exceptionalism (see Chapter Three).⁷³

Therefore, while the politics of taqlidi rap stand next to the Makhzen's narrative, groups like H-Kayne and Fnaïre have joined fusion musicians to create new kinds of Moroccan popular music that push the boundaries of Moroccanness aesthetically constructing a more complex version of this identity. While in H-Kayne's production, this tendency is frequently performed through lyrics that talk about the nation,⁷⁴ Fnaïre capitalizes on the sounds aesthetics of taqlidi rap constructed as Moroccan. Fnaïre's aesthetics have evolved not only to lyrically

⁷² French support of Sufism is also evident in movies such as *M. Ibrahim et les Fleurs du Coran* (2003). The movie presents the story of friendship between a Jewish boy and a Muslim shop owner from a popular neighborhood in Paris. The Muslim character, played by Omar Sharif, embodies the depoliticized language and spirituality with which Sufism is presented.

⁷³ Morocco's efforts to export a moderate religiosity is clearly evidenced in the inauguration on March 27, 2015 of a training institute for Moroccan and foreign imams to promote a tolerant Islam (http://telquel.ma/2015/03/28/mohammed-vi-inaugure-nouvel-institut-formation-imams_1440204).

⁷⁴ See Chapter Three for a further examination of H-Kayne's music production and patriotism.

reproduce hegemonic narratives on the nation, but also to engage with sounds that include Amazigh and Gnawa identity equally important to Arabness (that is, Arabic and Arabic sounds) as part of Morocco's national identity and cultural heritage. The next section examines the politics of aesthetics of Fnaïre's song "Attarikh"⁷⁵ (The History), released as a single in 2008 to commemorate twelve centuries of Moroccan history. Analysis of the song puts forward the argument that while taqlidi rap serves to exhibit the Makhzen's political narrative of a 'modern' and tolerant country, it also pushes the boundaries of the hegemonic signifiers of Moroccan nationalism such as Arabness by presenting a more complex and multilayered national identity.

3. The Aesthetics Politics of Taqlidi Rap

The relationship between taqlidi rap, patriotism and the official elite narratives unfolds in Fnaïre's music in songs such as "Attarikh" (2008). In this song, Fnaïre draws on Andalusí music and how it has been social and politically constructed in Morocco to reproduce the nationalist narrative of the long history of the Moroccan nation and its continuity into the present through the lineage of the monarchy. Reversed, the connection becomes the capitalization of the monarchy to present Morocco as a country with a long history. While in this sense the song reinforces dominant perceptions of national identity, it also provides a field for alternative definitions as the idea of the nation now includes other Moroccan identities. The aesthetics of Andalusí music, therefore, is connected to the social and political changes in the Moroccan identity where Amazighity, Africanness and/or Blackness (See Chapter 5), for example, are gaining visibility. While Fnaïre's songs reproduce hegemonic narratives of the nation; they also encourage listeners to broaden their

⁷⁵ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nSdRcfEl0jk> [Accessed March 12, 2014].

idea of Moroccan identity to incorporate Amazighity, Africanness, as well as elements of Al Andalus and the Mediterranean area.

The Andalusí music tradition is connected with the holy month of Ramadan as well as to other religious festivities and ceremonies. Shannon argues that its consumption is marginal and relegated to a passive position by the majority of the population: “Andalusian music is passively consumed by anyone tuning the Moroccan television and radio during religious holidays, the occasional state television programs on Morocco’s cultural heritage [...] and in hotel lounges and some restaurants” (Shannon 2007, p.322). Moreover, the contemporary promotion of Andalusí music takes place within amateur associations or music festivals like the *Fez Festival of World Sacred Music* (Shannon 2007, p.324; Langlois 2009, p.213). However, Aydoun claims that because of contemporary mediums of communications like TV, radio, CDs as well as specialized festivals, Andalusí is present well beyond its traditional centers like Fes, Rabat, Tetouan and Chefchaouen.

As patrons of the arts, the Moroccan upper classes have contributed to the promotion of Andalusí to the detriment of popular genres like Gnawa (Langlois 2009, p.213). The Makhzen’s support of Andalusí music is related to the nationalist urge to reproduce a new national identity rooted in an ideal precolonial and unbroken historical past (Burke 1998b, p.4; Shannon 2007, p.321; Langlois 2009, pp.213–214). Andalusí music itself received its name during the colonial era, as during previous centuries it had been referred to by its stylistic elements as *al āla* or *nubāt al ālāt* (turn-taking of instruments) (Shannon 2007, p.321). The new name given to the music genre supports its connection within a linear narrative of a glorious past when the Almoravids and Almohads dynasties conquered much of the Iberian

Peninsula (Reynolds 2009, pp.176–177). This music became emblematic of a “new national identity, providing a model of ‘high culture’ to rival (or perhaps supplant) that of Europeans, authenticated by an unbroken historical tradition” (Langlois 2009, pp.213–214). By choosing Andalusí music for their song “Attarikh,” Fnaïre’s links past and present, and situates itself within a particular music tradition, as well as transmitting the country’s cultural heritage.

Through Fnaïre’s use of Andalusí music in “Attarikh,” the rappers are able first to capitalize on a golden age in the collective Moroccan memory and second, to recreate the ideal notion of peaceful coexistence during the time of Al Andalus between the Muslims, Jews and Christians. The lyrics sustain the aesthetics of Andalusí music by preserving the nationalist depiction of an ideal pre-colonial nation. Fnaïre focuses on Morocco’s long history and a diverse cultural heritage by emphasizing a country with unattainable beauty as the lyrics of the song show:

Our Morocco is the place, the place is brilliant/the most beautiful of all countries, its history is brilliant/We have been twelve centuries in this place/we count our history in years/we are like many civilizations that preceded us/with an honest happiness in the hearts/come on, let’s make our country proud.⁷⁶

The lyrics relate the foundation of Morocco to an old monarchy with a “long and continuous past” (Combs-Schilling 1999, p.177; Stora 2003, p.16; Daadaoui 2011, p.45), and Fnaïre locates the beginning of the Moroccan nation with the monarchy:

The history of my country is big, a big encyclopedia, a forest/Moulay Idris II, Amazighs are a treasure of meanings/Wattasid, Almoravid I have not finished yet/Almohads,

⁷⁶ “*Maghribna lem9am, lem9am zahi/Zinat lbouldan, tarikh'ha zahi/12 9arn hadi w 7naya f lemkan/tarikhna me7ssoub b le3wam/7adarat bezzaf sab9a/W lfar7a f le9loub sad9a/Yallaho nnodo b bladna.*”

Merenids and Saadians, in my language/‘Alawites are with whom I finish and today my argument is clear/ Oh wake up, our history is here for a long time/you cannot just come and say you are Moroccan, wait⁷⁷

Contrary to regular chronologies of Morocco that set the date of the creation of the Moroccan state with Idris I around 788 (Sater 2010, p.xiii) or 789 (Combs-Schilling 1999, p.178), Fnaïre sets the start of the national history with Idris II (802-828). However, it was the father of Idris II, Moulay Idris, who is recognized as the founder of the Idrisid dynasty and is noted as the first to perform the bay‘a or oath of allegiance. Idris II was the first monarch to be born within what is today Moroccan territory, in Volubilis, an ancient Roman city in northeastern Morocco near the city of Meknes. The prominence of Idris II in Fnaïre’s song can be attributed to the fact that the group describes the Moroccan national identity as half Arab and half Amazigh: “Our history is a great treasure/this is a story that began/with a good intention, an Arab married an Amazigh.”⁷⁸ In this sense, “Attarikh” places Amazighity in a privileged position as part of the foundation of Moroccan identity. In Fnaïre’s foundational myth of Morocco, contrary to the nationalist and state narrative until the 2011 constitutional reform, Amazigh identity is as important as the Arab one.⁷⁹ This is significant in the way it questions the hegemonic national consciousness constructed by the nationalist movement in postcolonial Morocco, which was based on the idea of Morocco as an Arab-Muslim nation (Stora 2003, p.22).

⁷⁷ “*Tarikh bladi kbir mawssou3a ktira ghaba/Moulay Driss tani amazighiya kanza m3ani/Wattasiyine Mourabitine mazal ma nsali/Mouwa7idine Mriniyine w Sa3diyine f lsani/3alawiyine bach khtemt w lyoum ban borhani/Fi9 rah kayn tarikhna men ayn w layn/Machi ghir aji w goul Maghribi ana, sayn.*”

⁷⁸ “*Tarikhna kenz meknoun/hadi 9issa bdat/Ah b7ossn niya, tzouwej 3arby amazighiya.*”

⁷⁹ Combs-Schilling (1999, p. 207) argues that most of the population at that time spoke a Tamazigh dialect.

Fnaïre's exaltation of Amazighity, mainly through its lyrics but also in the use of beats that imitate instruments like the *gembri*,⁸⁰ is not simply a challenge to dominant narrative, and does need to be understood within the wider political and social context as a Makhzen's move to absorb dissident voices. Fnaïre's insistence on the centrality of the Amazigh community as part of the foundation of Morocco showcases "the state's recognition of Morocco's Amazigh culture as an integral part of the country's cultural and historical heritage (which marks the end of the monolithic conception of Morocco's history and culture" (Errihani 2013, p.57). Although no political changes occurred until July 17, 2001 when King Mohammed VI recognized the Amazigh language and culture through a royal dahir, King Hassan II had already shifted the public discourse towards Amazighity and Tamazight languages. The shift came when in August 20, 1994 King Hassan II declared the group a part of Moroccan identity and heritage (Errihani 2013, p.58). However, when King Mohammed VI established the Royal Institute of Amazigh Culture (IRCAM) the new king was able to present himself as a supporter Amazigh culture as part of the country's heritage (Linn 2011; Errihani 2013). The changing state's politics towards the recognition of Amazighity culminated in the new 2011 Constitution promulgated under the leadership of King Mohammed VI recognizing Moroccan cultural diversity in order to absorb dissident voices. The 5th Article of the constitution signals Tamazigh as an official language of the country: "the Amazigh constitutes an official language of the State, as a common patrimony of all Moroccans without exception."⁸¹ The new constitution also acknowledges other

⁸⁰ The *gembri*, also called *sintir* or *hejhouj*, is a squared string instrument with a bass sound. Although it is associated to Gnawa music, is an instrument used in other Moroccan music genres.

⁸¹ <http://www.maroc.ma/NR/exeres/E6E8A1FB-7FD4-439F-8432-BA927B5189FC.htm> [Accessed May 5, 2014].

identities like Saharawi, African, Hebrew or Andalusian, within the Moroccan nation. As the preamble of the new constitution states:

[Morocco is] a Muslim sovereign state, committed to its national unity and its territorial integrity, the Kingdom of Morocco intends to preserve, in its fullness and diversity, its national identity, one and indivisible. Its unity, forged through the convergence of its Arabo-Islamic, Amazigh and Saharan-Hassani components, is nourished and enriched by its African, Andalusian, Hebrew and Mediterranean streams.⁸²

The preamble provides evidence of Morocco's aim to embrace its historical links and geopolitical location as African, Amazigh, Arab and Mediterranean.

These new identities had already featured in Fnaïre's song "Attarikh," as it not only makes use of Andalusian music, but also embraces Morocco's diversity in its lyrics, which anticipate the changes in the new constitution. In the second verse of the song, Fnaïre relates the prophetic lineage to African roots: "This is a spiritual story, from a prophetic lineage/it veins are in an African land."⁸³ Thus, contrary to nationalist claim that locate Morocco as an Arab country, the song suggests that the king's prophetic lineage is rooted in Africa. Fnaïre and the new constitution's links to Africa can be seen in another way under King Mohammed VI's program for a major increase in economic and cooperation agreements with other African countries (*France 24* March 5, 2014; *The Economist* February 24, 2014).⁸⁴ Musically, in the past decade, groups of rock and fusion like Hoba Hoba Spirit or Darga have also

⁸² Ibid.

⁸³ "Hadi 9issa ro7aniya, men soulala nabawiya/3rou9ha fard ifri9iya."

⁸⁴ <http://www.economist.com/blogs/pomegranate/2014/02/moroccos-role-africa> [Accessed May 5, 2014]; <http://www.france24.com/en/20140305-moroccan-king-plays-business-religious-ties-african-tour/> [Accessed May 5, 2014]; <http://www.prnewswire.com/news-releases/kings-four-nation-tour-deepens-moroccos-partnerships-in-africa-more-than-80-agreements-signed-for-economic-social-cooperation-249944271.html> [Accessed May 5, 2014].

exploited the Africanness of Morocco's identity as it is through music that the Africanness of Moroccan national identity becomes visible (Bentahar 2010, p.41).⁸⁵ For example, Hoba Hoba Spirit in their song "Basta Lehya"⁸⁶ (2003) sings: "I was born in Casa, *Ifriqi mya flmya*" (African 100%). In this track, Hoba Hoba Spirit employs the Afro-Caribbean sounds of reggae music to support the Africanness of Casablanca, which was previously claimed by the group Nass El Ghiwane when it incorporated instruments from the Gnawa music tradition (Bentahar 2010, p.41). In the same way, the singer Oum builds her artistic image from African roots by appearing in her video clips singing in the desert dunes attired in garments that exploit Morocco's connection with Africa.⁸⁷

In the rap scene, beyond Fnaïre, rapper Don Bigg acknowledges the Africanness of Moroccan identity in his song "Ifri9ia"⁸⁸ (Africa) (2009). In this song, the rapper frames Morocco as part a disfavored continent abused by the US, Europe and international institutions like the United Nations (UN). As the chorus states: "Come and go there, don't stay here, United Nations is laughing at one of us."⁸⁹ The song goes on: "I see Africa, in its mouth there's a fake smile/Because in the flood people got killed in Burkina Faso/In Nairobi killing is a hobby/For UN Africa is the phobia."⁹⁰ These statements not only criticize the UN as a foreign organization that is not helpful for Africa, but also contextualizes Morocco's troubles

⁸⁵ Chapter Five of this thesis dwells on rap's connection to issues of race, and 'Blackness' in Morocco.

⁸⁶ <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=82uPZwHypmM> [Accessed February 5, 2014].

⁸⁷ See the references to Oum in the introduction of this thesis (p.37). <http://en.qantara.de/content/the-moroccan-fusion-singer-oum-i-am-a-muslim-but-i-make-decisions-about-my-life> [Accessed April 1, 2014].

⁸⁸ <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Lq-ZNwcKprU> [Accessed February 5, 2014].

⁸⁹ "*Aji sir lhih, khalik hna, l'ONU katdhak 3la wahed menna.*"

⁹⁰ "*Kanchouf Ifri9ia, f fommha dahka falso/7it fel fayadanate, t9atlo f Borkinafasso/Nayrobi, l9tila 3andhom hobby/bennisba l'ONU ifri9ia hia lfobie.*"

within the rest of the continent. Don Bigg and Fnaïre songs are significant in that it delocalizes Morocco from the limitedness of a Muslim, Arab and MENA region socio-political context and presenting Morocco multilayered and complex geo-political and historical situation that links it to further geographies.

Nevertheless, as Mohammed Errihani (2008) suggests, the general attitude in Morocco towards Amazighity still remains negative, and despite the Don Bigg song to Africa, Africanness also remains peripheral compared to the prominence of the national identity that is asserted throughout the rapper's cultural productions. Other than in the track "Ifri9ia," the rapper does not claim Africa as part of Moroccan identity in a significant way. Even if this track locates Morocco within the African continent, in its lyrics the rapper does not assume an African identity in a direct manner, dealing always with Africa in the third person and not the first. Though Fnaïre's narrative in "Attarikh" and other songs such as "Tajine Loughat"⁹¹ (Tajine of Languages) (2007) support a multiethnic and multilingual Moroccan identity where Amazighity plays a main role and Fnaïre claims that they use Tamazigh in their song lyrics,⁹² these songs remain rare and limited in the rap crew's repertoire without any complete song performed in this language.

Regardless of any artistic and socio-political efforts to broaden Morocco's national identity, dominant narratives of the nation linked to the nationalist discourse are well rooted in Morocco. Despite the official narrative's strength, music production demonstrates that rappers are able to introduce changes to this narrative even if these are subtle. Moreover, research on other Moroccan popular music

⁹¹ http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eTtX8C5_Qrg [Accessed May 13, 2014].

⁹² www.fnairemusic.com [Accessed May 5, 2014].

genres, for example Gnawa (See Langlois 2009; Schaefer 2009) or fusion (See Callen 2006) provides evidence of the power of music in broadening the borders of national identity and incorporating new narratives. Despite how Moroccan identity is shaped, the existence of fusion music and taqlidi rap also responds to the prominence of the nation and national identity in postcolonial Morocco. The next section argues that young Moroccan rappers feel pressure to claim national identity in their music production so that it is not perceived as foreign. Even if – unlike Fnaïre – Moroccan rappers choose to use beats that do not relate to Moroccan music genres, rappers still feel the need to highlight Moroccan identity with their lyrics to position themselves within their national scene.

4. Moroccanness and Global Flows

Contemporary Moroccan music genres like fusion or rap locate Moroccan artists within the global flows of cultural production because of their intertwinement with international music genres. Studies where music is framed in the national space also tend to connect it to other spaces like the local, regional, transnational and global (Nooshin 2009, p.14). For example, studies on global hip hop like *Global Noise* (Mitchell 2001b), *Global Linguistic Flows* (Alim 2009) or *The Languages of Global Hip Hop* (Terkourafi 2010) frequently present collections of essays framed by national and local spaces however connected globally. In hip hop, global connections that provide a space for interaction between international members of the hip hop culture have been formulated within the concept a hip hop nation (See for example Mitchell 2001a, p.32; Alim 2009, p.3). Rap music in Morocco, therefore, supports the idea of the existence of shared cultural spaces that are not necessarily associated with geographical proximity (Lipsitz 1994, p.6; Nooshin 2009, pp.13–14). Drawing

on the work of Arjun Appadurai on cultural globalization, Beck and Beck-Gernsheim argue that “the life of even ordinary people is no determined by their immediate surroundings, but increasingly by world society realities and possibilities” (2009, p.28). This section claims, however, that although it is necessary to overcome methodological nationalism⁹³ as a frame of reference, local specificities must be taken into account. Therefore, the analysis of Moroccan rap points in two directions: the need for in-depth studies of local and national context; and the fact that the concept of a hip hop nation or Global Hip Hop Nation (GHHN) – both explained thereafter – remains superficial. Yet, an analysis of global cultural flows is important as it underscores the fact that young rappers in Morocco feel the need to claim their nationality as a response to frequent accusations of culturally imitating US rappers. This section therefore discusses from a local perspective how rap artists project new visions of what it means to be Moroccan in a global environment. As I here suggest, Moroccan rappers capitalize on US, French, the GHHN or their local influences in strategic ways to reflect on and construct their everyday lives in their own terms.

In the introduction to *Global Noise*, Tony Mitchell (2001a) argues that hip hop constitutes a global form that interacts with particular local contexts in order to construct new narratives. Mitchell claims that hip hop is a “glocal” culture, both global and a local at the same time (Mitchell 2001a, p.32). In an effort to connect the local and national rap scenes within the global expansion of hip hop, Mitchell names coins the term “hip hop nation” to refer to the group formed by different rap scenes around the globe (Ibid). In the introduction of *The Global Caph* (2006) editors Samy

⁹³ Methodological nationalism refers to the confinement of academic works to the limits of national borders unable to locate interactions beyond border crossing, interconnectedness and intercommunication (Beck & Beck-Gernsheim 2009, p.26).

H. Alim James G. Spady and Samir Meghelli engage with the idea of a hip hop nation even if the nomenclature is not explicitly employed, by stating: “[A]s participants in the global cultural-linguistics-musical flow that is Hip Hop, youth imagine themselves as members of a postmodern nation, a nation with international reach, a fluid capacity to cross borders” (Alim et al. 2006, p.11). According to this insight, the GHHN emerges as a discursive space of shared experiences that allow for new networks and affiliations to become visible while foregrounding the multilingual and multiethnic condition of the nation. Samy H. Alim (2009, p.3), drawing on Benedict Anderson’s notion of imagined community, later defines the GHHN as: “a multilingual, multiethnic ‘nation’ with an international reach, a fluid capacity to cross borders, and a reluctance to adhere to the geopolitical givens of the present.” Both of these definitions depict the GHHN as a ‘nation’ with fluid borders that can be crossed introducing the idea of ‘homeland’ in hip hop culture as not geopolitically defined. Despite the lack of borders, *The Global Cipa* (2006) bestows the GHHN with a set of shared experiences including culture, linguistics and music. The emergence of taqlidi rap suggests that Moroccan rappers are not solely connected to internal political and social narratives, but also part of global cultural flows. Global flows are thus also part of Moroccan rappers day-to-day lives even if its not a space connected geographically.

The GHHN as a global cultural flow constructed as a multilayered identity must, however, seriously consider the local particularities within global networks of communication to avoid oversimplified connections. This superficial statements are showcased in connecting Moroccan rap as part of ‘Francophone Africa’ and thus mainly influenced by French rap (See for example Pennycook 2006, p.6). Eric

Charry claims that while American rap is the source of rap in Africa (2012, p.3), “France became a crucial first link in the chain that brought rap to Africa – or at least to Francophone Africa” (2012a, p.4). Despite the inclusion of Moroccan rap within the hip hop circuits of French rappers, Moroccan artists rarely employ French in their cultural productions. As argued later in the first section of Chapter Two, the French language remains prominent amongst the upper classes in Casablanca and Rabat, both in the fields of education and administration, however, is not a language used by the majority of the population. Moreover, the theory of the French connection fails to acknowledge the different colonial pasts between the north – an area colonized by Spain – and the rest of the country under the French rule. Rapper Muslim from Tangiers, for example, one of the most popular Moroccan rappers does not speak French –or Spanish for that matter. The notion that Moroccan rappers rap are mainly influenced by French rap proved further inaccurate in the case of the Moroccan rappers I encountered during my fieldwork (2011-2013).⁹⁴ During our interview on June 26, 2013 in Darija, Muslim voiced his connection with the US old school: “French rap not so much... We are inspired from the first school, the big school.”⁹⁵ Even if Muslim is not a master of English, he went on to explain that the aesthetics of US hip hop lead him to engage with rap music: “It was the beat, the flow and the style, it was this rage of the MC, and then when you like a song you take it and try to translate it bit by bit”⁹⁶ (Muslim 2013, interview, June 26). Muslim manifests a special admiration for the American rapper Tupac: “I like his courage, and his life. I

⁹⁴ The exception is rapper Hatim from the group H-Kayne who raps mainly in French, but also includes lines and words in Darija, or the first songs of Mobydick. Chapter Two sections one and two further dwell with the specificities of language in Moroccan rap.

⁹⁵ “*Rap Français chwiya, machi bezzaf... 7na kan t'inspiraw men lmedrasa louwla, lmedrasa lkbira.*”

⁹⁶ “*Ya3ni katsma3 lbeat lflow w ttari9a, la rage li kirappi biha hadak fhamti, w men ba3d kan ki3jbek chi disco ka ttarjmo mezyan w kat7awel tfahmo b chwia b chwia.*”

pity him because he was killed at the age of 24. All I can say is Tupac, Rest In Peace” (*Student Life* 2010, p. 22).⁹⁷ However, as Muslim claimed in our interview, he likes Tupac, “but I liked Coolio's ‘Gangsta's Paradise’ a lot, I used to listen to it a lot and I rapped on its beat for long” (Muslim 2013, interview, June 26). Just as Muslim does, rapper Don Bigg claims that he learned hip hop through TV “I had a very direct teacher, MTV”⁹⁸ (*TelQuel* September 9, 2006).⁹⁹ In an article where Jeffrey Callen reflects on rapper Don Bigg, Callen affirms that, “Bigg displayed his knowledge of the genesis of hip-hop in the Bronx and emphasized the influence of [American] East Coast artists, such as Afrika Bambaata, Run DMC and Nas, on his style.”¹⁰⁰ Other American rappers, such as Wu Tang Clan are also important for Moroccan rappers such as Masta Flow from Casa Crew,¹⁰¹ or the young members of the crew L’Bassline.¹⁰² In this sense, US rap continues to be significant for young rappers, as stated by rappers Fat Mizzo (2013) and Dizzy DROS (2012a, interview, February 15). Even rapper Mobydick (2013, interview, July 5), who told me that despite the influence of French rappers like IAM or NTM and whose rap include songs completely in French, is highly influenced by American superheroes, Japanese video games or, as his own name points out, popular literary characters.¹⁰³ There is enough evidence to argue the existence of global cultural flows, however, these

⁹⁷ <http://www.alctangier.org/SLM> [Accessed May 5, 2014].

⁹⁸ “J’avais un prof très direct, MTV.”

⁹⁹ http://m.telquel-online.com/archives/238/arts1_238.shtml [Accessed July 23, 2014].

¹⁰⁰ <http://jeffreycallenphd.files.wordpress.com/2009/12/don-bigg-works-the-room.pdf> [accessed May 6, 2013].

¹⁰¹ “[D]ans le rap anglais ma source d’inspiration c’est le Wu Tang” (Masta Flow 2011, interview, November 2).

¹⁰² <http://www.yabiladi.com/articles/details/15979/maroc-l-bassline-rappeurs-osent-clasher.html> [Accessed April 1, 2014].

¹⁰³ Chapter Five unravels further the connection of Moroccan rappers with narratives that critically links them to the US urban underclass African American context.

challenge pre-conceived perceptions that Morocco is only linked to the French area of influence.

While links to the French culture is accepted within the Moroccan cultural field, the connection with the US of rap music has put many Moroccan rappers in danger of accusations of falling under the influence of cultural imitation or imperialism. The Moroccan cultural manager Hicham Abkari (2008) declares that during the first years of Moroccan rap scene, rappers and hip hop culture were often perceived in terms of cultural imperialism. Although these accusations have diluted and rap has become a popular music genre in national media, researchers like Aomar Boum (2013) continue to frame hip hop culture within the narrative of cultural imperialism. He asserts that the emergence of Moroccan rap is a consequence of passive exposure to US culture (2013, p.162). In a similar way, Tarik Sabry claims that among the Moroccan youth there is a tendency to read the West in a positive and uncritical manner (2010, p.110). Indeed, the emergence of hip hop scenes outside the US is often perceived as a 'mere imitation art' since there is a clam of a single origin for hip hop located in the Bronx (Omoniyi 2009, p.115). Suspicions of cultural imperialism are not unique to the Moroccan context. Different studies on rap scenes around the world, such as the Senegalese (Pennycook & Mitchel 2009, p.32), Japanese (Broder 2006, p.40) or African scenes (Charry 2012a, p.1) claim that youth tend to imitate rappers in the US before starting to shape their work according to their own context.

However, this insight emerges as simplistic as the theory of cultural imperialism thus remains reductionist when dealing with global flows, and has been contested by great number of scholars (See for example Frith 1991; Garofalo 1993;

Shuker 1994; Guibault 1997; Born & Hesmondhalgh 2000; Mitchell 2001a; Stokes 2004; Biddle & Knights 2007; Omoniyi 2009). As Mitchell (2001a, p.32) explains, the study of hip hop cannot be understood only as an example of American cultural imperialism imported by youth around the world, and neither can it be uniquely perceived as a local culture. The imitation model is simplistic because hip hop scenes emerging outside the US cannot be considered as mere replicas of US hip hop, since they interact with diverse cultural realities (Omoniyi 2009, p.116; Stokes 2004, pp.54–55). The fact remains that it is not possible to speak about pure cultural models, since “globalization cannot be unproblematically equated with homogenization” (Biddle & Knights 2007, p.7). In the Moroccan case, the cultural imperialism thesis does not account for the entire picture in popular culture, festivalization, and music, as the theory assumes a cultural homogeneity and a passive consumption of culture (El Maarouf 2013, pp.8–9). In other words, as argued by Stuart Hall (1981, p.233), popular culture forms are not whole and coherent, but extremely contradictory. Therefore, while cultures are not homogenous neither can they be simply replaced or substituted (El Maarouf 2013, pp.8–9).

These narratives of cultural imperialism, the undefined geopolitical borders of the GHN, global flows, and the significance of the nation in the construction of postcolonial Morocco have together urged some rappers to exhibit their national identity in their cultural production. As earlier argued, national identity has been displayed through the use of music genres recognized as Moroccan such as Andalusí. However, Moroccan rappers also explicitly claim that their music production is Moroccan as for example rapper Don Bigg:

I don't work much with Arabic samples, I'm more a fan of old music like soul, 70s, 60s, but I try as much as possible that the message is Moroccan, and that it gets to the audience like this, that when you hear the beat you think it's made by Americans but the guys who made it are Moroccans and 100% Arabic. We want to take rap up, that's why we try as much as possible to make our own music, we don't want it to be something else.¹⁰⁴

The fact that musically Don Bigg does not draw on Arabic samples to claim his national identity, means the rapper is forced to claim it through his songs' lyrics, but also the title of his first solo album *Mgharba Tal Mout* (*Moroccans Until Death*) (2006) and the first track of this album also called "Mgharba Tal Mout"¹⁰⁵ (*Moroccans Until Death*) (2006). At the end of this song, the rapper clarifies that his rap is 100% Moroccan even if the beat is not: "*New style new shit/100% Moroccan music/the beat is over there and rap is over here, and wake up!/Who loves my country loves me, and who hates it, screw him.*"¹⁰⁶ His attachment to the nation reflected in these lines, is repeated in another song of the same album called "Skizo Fri3"¹⁰⁷ (*Cool Schizo*) (2006). The last lines of this track affirm that despite the disarray and economic and social inequities that elites have caused and still perpetuate in Morocco, Don Bigg is still 100% Moroccan: "I'm proud of it [Morocco] even if I have to walk over you/People like you got my country down, but

¹⁰⁴ "*Ana ma kan khdemch bezzaf b les samples 3arbiyine hada, je suis beaucoup plus fan l la soul dakchi mosi9a 9dima 70s 60s, fhamtini walakin kan7awel ma amkan b ana lmessage ykoun meghribi, w ywssal, b anna katsma3 lbeat katgoul ra b7alla mirikan li msawbino walakin ra drary li dayrino ra mgharba ra 100% 3arbiya. Rap hna bghina ntall3oh, dakchi 3lach lmosi9a ma amkan kan7awlo nsawboha 7na, ma kanbghiwch tkoun 7aja akhra, peace*" (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HHY-U1vKYLo> [Accessed February 5, 2014]).

¹⁰⁵ <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4MHTBkEpos8> [Accessed March 12, 2014].

¹⁰⁶ "*New style new shit/Moussi9a 100% Maghribiya/Lbeat men llih w rap men hna, w nayda!/Li bgha bladi bghani, wlli krahha dar lih.*"

¹⁰⁷ The title plays with the word schizophrenia and the word *fri3* which means "cool." <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uHyHX5BIK08> [Accessed February 5, 2014].

today I like my country/100% Moroccan with the mouth and mind.”¹⁰⁸ Just like Don Bigg, Othman Benhami (2012) from H-Kayne claimed in an interview that the group adopted rap and the hip hop culture, but added that he believed it is a 100% Moroccan production. While Don Bigg and Othman recognize the foreign influences in Moroccan rap music, they feel the need to clarify the Moroccaness of their identity and therefore of their music production. These examples suggest that Moroccan rappers project the main role that national identity play in postcolonial Moroccan culture, but also that the fact of belonging to a global cultural flow urges these rappers to specify their national identity.

Angela Jansen (2013, p.170) argues that Moroccan artists feel the pressure to fulfill and incorporate in their work globally recognized signifiers of Moroccan culture coming from tapestry, embroidery, woodcarving and other traditional artistic expressions. Jansen suggests in her study of Moroccan fashion that Moroccan artists are not only pressured to meet the expectations of a foreign audience in what this audience recognizes as Moroccan, but also that these practices have been absorbed locally. Within this perspective, members of the nation imagine themselves as others have imagined them. In the case of Moroccan fashion, new designers that do not engage with local and global perception of Moroccaness are criticized for producing collections that are considered as not ‘Moroccan’ (Jansen 2013, p.171). In hip hop, the emphasis on national identity through music genres like taqlidi rap or rap lyrics also emerges as a reaction to the menace that globalization means to identity as argued by Manuel Castells (2009, p.69). The need to reflect national identity in taqlidi rap is thus as much a response to modernize Moroccan music

¹⁰⁸ “*Mftakher bih, khouya bezz men din mmot mmok/B7alk tay7o bladi wlyouma bladi 3ziza 3liya/100% Maghriby ki blfomm ki b’nnya.*”

genres, as to ‘Moroccanize’ rap music perceived as foreign and global and therefore satisfy local and global expectations of Moroccan aesthetics.

Nevertheless, rapper Dizzy DROS in a collaboration with the rap duo Shayfeen released in a 2013 song called “L’Benj”¹⁰⁹ (Anesthesia) that contest this pressure felt by Moroccan artists confirming the existence to fulfill such national signifiers. In this song, the young rappers aim to combat global signifiers of Morocco – such as wearing a *tarbouch*¹¹⁰ or a djellaba – often used to escape labels of cultural imperialism. These rappers’ song claims that the fact that rappers do not employ national signifiers in their lyrics, music or performances does not necessarily indicate a blind imitation of the US hip hop scene nor that their music is “not Moroccan.” Contrary to H-Kayne’s “Issawa Style,” where the rappers appeared wearing djellabas, in this song Dizzy DROS employs clothing to claim the image that his parents – who as adults represent in this song the hegemony of Moroccan society including the state – expect him have: “our parents... wanted *3azzy*¹¹¹ to become *faqīh*¹¹² and wear a djellaba and a tarbouch.”¹¹³ Traditional garments represent the expectations of Moroccan traditional society that, not only hope for youth to wear traditional clothes, but also to follow traditional professions such as being a *faqīh* or a doctor and not a rapper. The rupture between generations is developed in the following lines where Dizzy DROS claims that older people do not like young Moroccan rappers – or for that matter youth with hip hop clothes – because they do

¹⁰⁹ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FdhjRKUXFf8&list=UUy3aXKl3MmWXGj2mmxT9AsA> [Accessed March 24, 2014].

¹¹⁰ A *tarbouch*, also known as Fez, is a Moroccan red felt hat.

¹¹¹ *3azzy* refers to a black person in Moroccan Darija. This is the term rapper Dizzy DROS employs to call himself and members of the audience and friends. The third section of Chapter Five further examines this term and Dizzy DROS’ music production.

¹¹² *Faqīh* refers to an expert in Islamic jurisprudence.

¹¹³ “*Walidina... Bghaw l3azzy ykhroj f9ih ydrab jellaba w tarbouch.*”

not look Moroccan: “Why doesn’t my father like my pants when he sees them/Why your father doesn’t like 3azzy when he sees him/Old people don’t like us, they don’t keep their mouth shut/They say ‘this is not ours, they’re not ashamed.’”¹¹⁴ Rapper Shobee from Shayfeen states in the last verse of the song “Forgive me I don’t want to live like a robot... Let me do what I want even if I live in slow motion/I dream about myself behind a mic not behind a desk.”¹¹⁵ These lines identify expectations of a traditional life – to become a doctor and marry – as repetitive and monotonous. In our interview, Shobee expressed the group’s lack of interest in dealing with topics he considers worn out such as the Sahara. However, Shobee (Shayfeen 2013, interview, April 15) claims he prefers to openly discuss topics in their songs that are more significant in daily life such as challenging traditional practices like living as a couple without marrying. Small X, from the group Shayfeen, makes the same claim of agency in his verse in “L’Benj:” “My pants are sag, it says fuck the state.”¹¹⁶ In the line, Small X turns hip hop aesthetics embodied in baggy pants as a tool to challenge the Moroccan State. The baggy pants relate Small X to global hip hop aesthetics and rebellious youth and serves him to claim his voice within society. Hip hop clothes thus reflect the aim of these young rappers to confront authority, be it from adults or the state. This song embodies challenges faced by Moroccan youth that wish to question social norms, expectations and traditions going beyond the state as a political actor. Although the aim to confront and reshape their social milieu may also be found in other music cultures like rock or punk, the followers of these urban

¹¹⁴ “3lach bba mli kichouf serwali ma ki3ajbouch/3lach bbak mli kichouf l3azzy ma ki7amlouch/Nnass lekbar w7alna lihom, ma kisektouch/Ki7arrko lina hadchi machi dyalna ma kimergouch/Ta malk kaddoukh nigga/Baghi dir b7alna.”

¹¹⁵ “Sem7o lia la mabghitch n3ich robot... Khallini ana ndir li bghit wakha n3ich slow mo’/Kan7lem brassi mora mic machi mora bureau.”

¹¹⁶ “Serwali tay7, kigoul fuck doula.”

youth cultures is very limited in number as compared to rap and hip hop audiences and practitioners.¹¹⁷

The rupture with older generations and traditional society is also reenacted in the song “L’Benj” by distancing their music production from traditional music. This rupture is depicted by stating the difference between Fnaïre’s work and the artists’ own production when Dizzy DROS claims in this song that his album *3azzy 3ando Stylo* (Nigga Got a Style) (2013) is not an example of Fnaïre’s taqlidi rap, embodied in the song and album *Yed El Henna* (The Hand of Henna) (2007).¹¹⁸ Rather, Dizzy DROS claims that: “Hey! *Nigga Got a Style* is not *The Hand of Henna*”¹¹⁹ as he is distancing himself from that song. DROS line suggests his disconformity with Fnaïre’s attachment to cultural signifier of traditional Morocco instead of rebelling against these imposed signifiers. These signifiers that connect Moroccan music to the MENA region are also denounced by Small X the first verse claiming that this song is “No Abdel Wahab, no Kulthum.”¹²⁰ Both of these Egyptian singers embody the centrality of the nation in the MENA region’s popular culture and exemplify the patriotic singers with whom these rappers’ identify Fnaïre, but not their own work. Moreover, Oum Kulthum and Abdel Wahab relate to an Arab music tradition beyond the nation with which these rappers wish to leave behind by building their own music that differentiates them from adult’s music taste.

In “L’Benj,” Dizzy DROS and Shayfeen’s aim is not to reject the group’s national identity, but to claim the agency of reimagining it in their own terms. In

¹¹⁷ During my fieldwork, I only spotted punk young people in Rabat meeting Saturday afternoons around the main train station of the city or in the rock concerts of the festival L’Boulevard in Casablanca.

¹¹⁸ Chapter Three examines this song by Fnaïre in depth.

¹¹⁹ “*Rah 3azzy 3ando Stylo hada machi yed l7anna.*”

¹²⁰ “*Makin la Abdelwahab la Kulthum.*”

“L’Benj,” by manifesting the exhaustion of engaging with local and global signifiers of Moroccanness, rappers Dizzy DROS, Small X and Shobee ultimately claim the right to shape these signifiers and challenge monolithic constructions of Moroccanness. This section argues that by considering the nation within global cultural flows, the pressure of linear continuous historical narratives strongly emerge in the rappers’ work. In the Moroccan context, rappers like Don Bigg, Fnaïre and H-Kayne feel the need to express national identity through the music production. Younger rappers like Dizzy DROS and Shayfeen have decided to critically confront this theme by expressing their aim to reshape signifiers of national identity. In all, through these different perspectives, these Moroccan rappers perceive as important the fact of placing the nation within global cultural flows and even in the construction of local identities. The analysis of Moroccan rap, therefore, encourages exploring beyond national borders, however, at the same time requires an appreciation of local traits for which the concept of hip hop nation or GHHN remain superficial.

Conclusion

This chapter provides evidence of the significance of rap music and hip hop culture in negotiating national identity. In Morocco, the emergence of taqlidi rap suggests that the nation continues to be central in Moroccan postcolonial identity. The fact that artists draw on music genres such as Andalusi promoted by Moroccan nationalist elites following the struggle for independence suggests that rappers like Fnaïre are willing to link past and present and to connect to Moroccan heritage. Moreover, by creating a rap style that includes national signifiers within a music genre perceived as foreign, rappers are able to shape, broaden and reimagine the field of Moroccan

popular music. Even if some rappers like Don Bigg experiment with beats that are far from the aesthetics of Moroccan traditional music genres, they engage with Moroccanness by expressing it through their lyrics or clothes in the case of H-Kayne's "Issawa Style." Whether the nation is embodied in aesthetics or lyrics, both of these tendencies provide evidence of the importance of music in creating a space to negotiate the nation. Rappers from the newer generations such as Dizzy DROS and Shayfeen manifest their will to break with the traditional signifiers of Moroccanness by opening new possibilities to shape their national identity beyond traditional local and global signifiers. The will to shape their own identity is also evident in Moroccan rappers' use of language and urban spaces. The following chapter will explore further local specificities to unravel the use of language and urban spaces in the rappers' construction of a rebellious and resistant art form. The Makhzen, however, has also capitalized on 'rebellious' rap to side with urban youth and aim at controlling this social group. The next chapter examines closely the attempts of the state to co-opt 'resistance.'

Chapter Two: Language, Urban Spaces and Cultural Resistance

Researchers of global hip hop have paid special attention to rap and language as a way of showcasing local specificities (See for example Alim et al. 2009; Terkourafi 2012). In Morocco, a diverse number of languages cohabite from the widely spoke Darija and Tamazigh¹ to the spoken French in big cities, the use of Modern Standard Arabic (MSA) and French in education, administration and the press. So while a Moroccan may perform and listen to prayers in Classical Arabic, their language at work may be French – especially in Rabat and Casablanca – or Spanish in the northern regions, and they may speak Tamazigh and/or Darija at home. Daily life in Morocco sees all these languages jostle against each other in ways that depend on whether one lives in an urban or rural area, one's gender, economic status, work and so forth. The different use of languages in Morocco depicts social power struggle where the language used, specially French, is related to social class (Canna 2012, p.139). Language's role as a medium of social control for middle and upper classes, therefore, allows it to be the field in which hip hop is able to culturally resist dominant social and political structures as Russell A. Potter (1995, p.64) argues.

Although the term 'cultural resistance' may have a diversity of meanings and forms, here it denotes culture that is used consciously or not to oppose dominant political, economic and social narratives (Duncombe 2002, p.5). This chapter presents language as a device with which rappers engage with Moroccan youth and resist dominant social and political narratives. In this endeavor, rappers may decide

¹ Tamazigh refers to the languages spoken within the diverse Amazigh cultures (Elkouche 2013, p.5).

to use ‘vulgar’² language to reproduce youth’s way of communicating among each other and oppose social norms of public language use or moderate their local dialect to widen their audience. The Makhzen, however, capitalizes on supporting rappers that employ ‘vulgar’ language framed as an expression of youth’s rebellion as a strategy to control unprivileged Moroccan urban youth.

Urban unprivileged young people play an important role in urban areas as cities are an important locus and focus of power and can operate as sites of representation, contestation and identification (Parker 2003, pp.139, 149–150). Cities and their streets are essential public spaces of political contention for urban subjects especially the unemployed, housewives, youth or those who are otherwise ‘informal people’ without access to institutional power (Bayat 2010, p.11). As language allows youth to narrate their daily experiences, occupying urban spaces also enables them to become as active members of society. However, as urban spaces may be liberating for youth, they can also become spaces of struggle to gain control over public space between authorities and informal groups (Bayat 2010, p.12). This is the case with Morocco’s urban spaces as suggested by Taieb Belghazi (2006) who claims that through the patronage of music festivals, the Makhzen aim to control urban spaces and thus youth.

This chapter unravels the complexities of language and urban spaces in acting as tools for youth’s cultural resistance against the state control, as well as devices for the Makhzen’s social dominance. For this reason, the first section of this chapter

² I refer to ‘vulgar’ language words and gestures to those that are constructed as inappropriate and unacceptable in social public gatherings – for example public spaces or family meetings – by the Moroccan cultural morals norms. This language, however, is used frequently openly by youth and in rapper’s lyrics published in CD format or Internet as I observed during my fieldwork (2011-2013).

examines the different uses of language in the field of culture in Morocco. It argues that while French has been considered a language of engagement, it only reaches upper classes. In order for rappers to engage with large segments of youth, they must use a language accessible to everyone. This section suggests that Darija is thus a tool of engagement. The second section goes on to nuance this idea, and looks at how rappers employ different language strategies to shape their music production. Rappers use Darija strategically to broaden their audience, and thereby gain a voice, or present their production as rebellious by using vulgar language that engages with the street talk. The case of rapper Don Bigg, as the third section of this chapter suggests, provides evidence that while rappers can use language and urban spaces to construct a rebellious artistic persona, this rebelliousness may be co-opted by the Makhzen. This section finds that the use of vulgar language and urban spaces associated to youth's social and political engagement does not necessarily reflect a social or political resistance to the state. Rappers and other Moroccan artists also fight in non-artistic ways to neutralize the state's control over the cultural field as main patrons of arts. Section four, looks to the struggle of Moroccan artists to receive their royalties confronted to the state's inaction to grant this income. It argues that research on resistance must also consider the economics and role of the state in the cultural field. Finally, section five presents the city of Casablanca as a space of cultural struggle between the artists sided with the Makhzen and rappers and other cultural actors who seek to resist its control over urban spaces and culture. Ultimately, this chapter suggests the need to examine the complexities of local and national particularities of the cultural field, in terms of language, the use of spaces as well as non-artistic strategies, in order to determine the politics of cultural resistance.

1. The Politics of Language in the Cultural Field

Morocco is a multilingual nation where languages respond to differences in class, education, gender, age, urban versus rural and social context (work, mosque, street corner, etc.). In many Arabic-speaking countries where Arabic is the official language or one of the official languages like in Morocco, there is often a wide gap between the official language – the written Literary Arabic or MSA – and the daily language or dialect (*‘āmmiyya* in Arabic and *dārija* or Darija as referred to in the Maghreb region), a gap that is referred to as diglossia (Ibrahim 2009, p.93). Over and above a diglossic Arabic, in Morocco there are different languages spoken within Amazigh communities, where in addition to the existence of spoken Tamazigh, Darija and written Arabic,³ the legacy of French colonial rule has left in the country a profound footprint that persists until nowadays in postcolonial Morocco as will be later examined. Although studies of Moroccan cultural production often consider the place of French in the cultural field – for example, Ferrando (2001, p.189) or Orlando (2009; 2011) – they hardly acknowledge the linguistic situation in the north of the country where Spanish and not French is spoken as second or third language (Hachimi 2001, p.29). Together with the rise in other languages like English, Morocco presents a complex linguistic topography. This section explores the use of language in the Moroccan cultural field to determine the terms in which languages may or not serve as a tool for social and political engagement.

Though Morocco boasts myriad types and modes of language, Article V of the Constitution of 2011 states the official languages of the country as Arabic and

³ Since 2003, Tamazigh became a mandatory school subject and Amazigh languages are nowadays written and taught in schools (Errihani 2013, p.57).

Tamazigh.⁴ The use of MSA, a simplified variant of Quranic Arabic, in Moroccan literature gained importance with the beginning of the country's nationalist struggle at the end of the 1930s and during the following decades that brought the vindication of a Moroccan literary cannon in MSA (Fernández Parrilla 2009, p.86). Literature in MSA varied in genre, so while a reformist school inclined towards traditional Arabic genres like the *qasida* poem,⁵ the modernists preferred journalistic writing and the short story (Graiouid 2000, p.153). In particular, the short story in MSA is a genre linked to social engagement reflecting on poverty, labor union rebellions, and social claims (Graiouid 2008, p.147). However, its formality means MSA is rarely used in Moroccan rap, and when it is used, it may be employed to give a humoristic and sarcastic effect as is the case of the rapper Nores⁶ or to favor the creation of rhymes, as is the case of Muslim. The lack of use of MSA responds to the disconnect of this type of Arabic from the everyday language youth employ to relate to each other, which in urban centers is almost always a variant of Darija as the next section details.

Arabic and Darija stage an ongoing social and political debate in Morocco that confronts those who argue that Darija should be recognized as an official language to those who defend the use of MSA. While groups within the secular civil society associated with the French-speaking elite promotes Darija, nationalists and Islamists oppose this trend claiming that the use of Darija by French-speaking groups is designed to marginalize the use of Arabic, and thus, the prominence of the language of the Quran (Miller 2012, p.171). However, members of the nationalist

⁴ Article V of the constitution also mentions the preservation of Hassani as part of the Moroccan cultural identity.

⁵ The *qasida* is a long mono-rhyme poem originated in pre-Islamic Arabian Peninsula.

⁶ For example in songs like "F9albi a7san" <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZhxVam4RYyk> [Accessed May 6, 2014] or "Gangster Arabi" http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2_Hmqz6TQWY [Accessed May 6, 2014].

elites like Allal El Fassi, founder of the nationalist Istiqlal party, are often criticized for promoting Arabic but educating their children in French elite schools (Boutieri 2012, p.449). Reading the music against this cultural scene, rapper's music production can be located within the political battle of the secular civil society, members of the Istiqlal party, and the Islamist PJD in their struggle to use language to push forward a political agenda.

In the middle of the Darija versus MSA debate, French continues to have a strong presence in Morocco. Although the constitution does not mention it as an official or protected language, French is employed mainly in urban centers with the exception of cities in the north such as Tangiers or Tetouan. The French language is a legacy of the colonial era and is still used by many at the administrative level of the country, as well as in some university disciplines, and in the cultural field (Moscoso García 2002, p.19). French is often found in programs on the national TV channel 2M, radio stations, in newspapers like *Libération*, *La Vie Éco* and *L'Economiste*, in magazines like *TelQuel*, *Aujourd'hui Le Maroc*, *Maroc Hebdo*, *Actuel*, or literary production. Valérie K. Orlando studies aspects of this phenomenon in *New Morocco in Film and Print* (2009) where she defends the singularity of Moroccan cultural productions in French. Orlando argues that the French language bestows Moroccan writers with the tools to be engaged writers: "being *engagé* for the Maghrebien author is almost synonymous with using French language" (2009, p.21). In distinguishing the particularity of francophone writing from the African diaspora and part of the Moroccan contemporary authors as *engagé*, Orlando disregards the significance of MSA in Moroccan literature and its role in social engagement. She thus perpetuates the idea that French is a language identified with rebel authors from

French literary history and that it is a language that means freedom in all its manifestations quoting Dominique Combe's study *Poétiques Francophones* (1995). Orlando overlooks the power relations between French and the other languages in Morocco, though she (2009, p.xiii) does note that French is inevitably connected to an elite that attends schools associated with *la Mission française*, like the Lycée Lyautey in Casablanca. These schools are related to wealth simply because only the wealthy can gain access to them (Canna 2012, p.138). Orlando (2009, p.xiii) also contemplates the fact that those able to read French are very few in a country with widespread illiteracy. In spite of this context in which French language culture is produced in Morocco, Orlando (2009, p.24) portrays francophone Moroccan writers as spokespersons for the Moroccan masses, that is, as social activists who write to change the social and political mentalities that prevent the country from progressing. She writes, "it is through French that some of the most pressing questions about Moroccan society, culture and politics are discussed" (Ibid, p.xv). Orlando's position reveals a bias towards French cultural production and overlooks the power relations that provide French language with its privileged position in the Moroccan cultural field.

The field of music, however, provides a different cartography of the language use in Morocco. Mostafa Shoul (2013, p.44) argues that the limited influence of French in Moroccan postcolonial music – restricted to a few words – could be read as a response to the nationalistic impulse against the French colonizers, or to the fact that much of the oral literature and popular music that rap draws from was composed before to the colonial period and therefore not influenced by French language. However, I also argue that this limited presence of French in popular culture is

related rather to the dialectic between the processes of production and the activities of consumption in the contemporary rap scene. In the article “Decoding/Encoding” (1980), Stuart Hall points out that when a message is transmitted its reception is never the same as it was encoded, that is, culture is normally decoded differently from the way it was encoded. Therefore, even if cultural production is created – or encoded – to fulfill a certain agenda, for example, to socially and politically engage, it may lose this agenda when received –or decoded. In understanding Hall’s idea in the relationship between power and culture, Storey argues that:

It is not just an understanding of how production produces a repertoire of commodities for consumption, but also an understanding of the many ways in which people appropriate, make meaningful, and use these commodities, make them into culture in the lived practices of everyday life. (Storey 2003, p.55)

Therefore, in considering acts of engagement, we need to consider not only the act of production, but also how this production is consumed. One wonders how the French language, which is not accessible to the majority of the population, can manage to address the anxieties and struggles of the same people? How can French be the language of those perceived as *engagé* if it does not grant agency to the majority of the population? Orlando’s analysis diminishes the agency of the majority of Moroccans to become involved and fight for their own social and political context. Moreover, by limiting the analysis to French cultural production, Orlando’s work offers a biased view of the Moroccan cultural field and the role of popular music in engaging with society due to the lack of music in French and the negligence of Moroccan literature and cinema in Arabic. It is, however, significant that in

Orlando's (2011) later analysis of Moroccan cinema, questions of representation and audiences are addressed in order to value a film's impact.⁷

While the use of French in Moroccan rap is rare, some rappers employ it strategically in specific songs. Two of the most known rappers to do so are Hatim Bensalha from the group H-Kayne and Mobydick. It is notable that both live in urban centers, Meknes and Rabat respectively. As I learned during my fieldwork (2011-2013), Hatim did his undergraduate studies in France and holds a French passport. He is the only member of the group H-Kayne to use French systematically in his verses. However, occasionally Hatim introduces lines in Darija as in his solo track "A la Marocaine"⁸ (2011): "*Toi tu files à l'anglaise safi salat l7afla*" (You go discreetly, enough the party is over). The mix of French –"*Toi tu files à l'anglaise*"– and Darija –"*safi salat l7afla*"– is common in cities and symptomatic of the large number of French words in the Darija of big cities. The case of Mobydick is different because the rapper used French in his first songs, but soon changed to Darija as he realized that rapping in French prevented his songs from reaching his intended audience. As he explained: "I realized that to connect, to communicate with the public, I had to switch to Darija"⁹ (*L'Officiel Hommes Maroc*, 2011). These rappers' use of French responds to the influence of French rap groups such as IAM or NTM as they told me in our respective interviews (Bensalha 2011, interview, July 2; Mobydick 2013, interview, July 5). While Hatim and Mobydick praise the social message of French rap and the political lyrics of IAM and NTM, Mobydick's change

⁷ In *Screening Morocco* (2011), Orlando deals with movies such as *Marock* (2005) or *Casanegra* (2008) in relation to their records in the box-office.

⁸ <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TkZreRE5Ees> [Accessed May 7, 2014].

⁹ "*J'ai réalisé que pour percer, pour communiquer avec le public, il fallait que je passe à la darija.*"

of language from French to Darija shows how limited French can be when it comes to engaging with the majority of unprivileged Moroccan youth.

As a language of everyday use Darija allows rapper to engage with and relate to unprivileged urban youth experiences. Although Darija is not an official language, it is often regarded as an informal vernacular oral language connected to street language and argot (Hachimi 2001, pp.27–28; Caubet 2005, p.240), it is the local language that “meets its speakers’ vital linguistic needs” (Shoul 2013, p.60). However, Darija is not exclusively used as spoken slang, as most definitions describe it, not it is exclusively related to street language. With the process of urbanization, the advent and increasing penetration of the internet and social media, Darija has started to enter written domains like SMS, advertising, newspapers, novels and some translation from French to Moroccan Arabic (Miller 2007, pp.19–20; Miller 2012, p.176). In this sense, some of the lyrics of rap songs, composed mostly in Darija, circulate on webpages and social media like Facebook contributing to the growing presence of Darija as a written language.¹⁰ One webpage, GQProd,¹¹ which is entirely dedicated to rap and includes rappers biographies, a list of recording studios in Morocco and DJs, news, and lyrics, presents all its information in French and Darija. Darija is thus not only a vernacular oral language, but is also written both in an alphanumeric Latinized Arabic and in Arabic characters.

It is also necessary here to differentiate between literary Darija (Allen 2011, p.317; Miller & Caubet 2012, p.4) –also referred to as *dialecto elaborado* (enhanced

¹⁰ For example, rapper Mobydick includes the lyrics of his track “7izb L3am Zine” on his Facebook page (<https://www.facebook.com/notes/mobydick/7izb-l3am-zine-lyrics/92296297506> [Accessed October 23, 2013])

¹¹ <http://qgprod.com/> [Accessed May 7, 2014].

dialect) (Fernández Parrilla & Islán Fernández 2009, p.154) and *darija dyal zan9a* or street Darija. As well as Tamazigh, Darija has geographical variants from the northern regions to the southern and from cities to rural areas (Moscoso García 2002, p.8; 2005, p.86). These linguistic variants, as different languages, must be considered when examining the role of language in the cultural field, since they have also “a category within a society where this very category is intimately related to a linguistic identity and a particular culture” (Moustaoui Srhir 2007, p.134). This same idea is acknowledged by Orlando when she claims that in cinema “language tends to dictate the paradigms of class, region, and social strata” (2011, p.15), to which it is important to add the word ‘age’ given the connection between slang and youth in Moroccan cultural production. It can thus be said that literary Darija is the variant used in oral stories, traditional oral literature such as the Malhun or Zajal, and in classical Moroccan music genres like Ayta and Andalusi (Shoul 2013, p.42).

This literary variant is also used by groups like Nass El Ghiwane who produced not only songs that vindicated social justice during the 1970s, but also revived traditional Moroccan stories (Fernández Parrilla & Islán Fernández 2009, p.152). The use of Darija by Nass El Ghiwane is a key factor in explaining their rapid acceptance and popularity for audiences across Morocco (Fernández Parrilla & Islán Fernández 2009, p.154). Through this language, Nass El Ghiwane – a band of young men from the poor neighborhood of Hay Mohammadi in Casablanca – voiced the anxieties and concerns of average Moroccans (Aadnani 2006, p.25). Nass El Ghiwane has influenced Moroccan rappers who often directly refer to them as a main element of their musical heritage (Bentahar 2010, p.45; Miller & Caubet 2012,

p.1).¹² Don Bigg declared that “80% of my album is directly inspired by this myth” (Caubet 2005, p.241) referring to the music of Nass El Ghiwane. Researchers (Fernández Parrilla & Islán Fernández 2009, p.152; Bentahar 2010, p.41; Miller & Caubet 2012, p.3; Bahmad 2013, p.20; Bahmad 2014, p.380) also describe Nass El Ghiwane as a mythical or legendary group due to their huge popularity and the unanimous esteem they are held in for their role in shaping contemporary Moroccan culture. Jamal Bahmad (2013, p.20) calls Nass El Ghiwane and the *Nayda*¹³ movement the two crucial sites of resistance in popular culture.

Despite the ongoing political debate over language, rappers connect to Nass El Ghiwane because the group relates to an unprivileged young urban through a language everyone understood. In the case of Don Bigg, the rapper capitalizes on Nass El Ghiwane and Darija to claim a rebellious character allowing him to relate to urban Moroccan unprivileged youth. The following section looks at Don Bigg as well as other artists to carry out analyses two different strategies in their use of Darija: the use of *darija dyal zan9a*, street Darija, and the use of *rap annaqi*, or refined or clean rap. The former is a language that includes swearwords and vulgar language (Miller 2012, p.171), used in everyday communication amongst the youth and is connected to the urban spaces of Casablanca and Rabat. The latter is a Darija that, although it is not strictly faithful to the everyday use, it does not use vulgar language and thus is more acceptable to a larger part of Moroccan society that rejects vulgar language, in particular outside of Casablanca (Ibid, 172).

¹² Also by Zakia Salime in the article “Rapping the Revolution” (May 28, 2011. Available at <http://muftah.org/rapping-the-revolution/> [Accessed May 7, 2014]).

¹³ The term *Nayda*, which translates from Darija as ‘stand up’ or ‘wake up,’ has been conceived an artistic movement to free the Moroccan youth of its oppression. The first section of Chapter Four further analyses the use of this term.

2. Urban Youth Language: Street Darija vs. Refined Rap

The idea of a refined rap can be related back to the narrative of *al fan annazīf* ('clean art') promoted by PJD. According to Graiouid & Belghazi (2013, pp.263, 267) this categorization was elaborated in opposition to what the party considered a decadent art imported from the West, and advocated instead for the control of cultural production in order to maintain the values of Islam and the Moroccan society. However, as this section argues, although rappers concept of refined rap may be related to a religious narrative, it is also linked to social conventions and respect of legal constraints that will be outlined below. Within the language variants of urban centers, the rap scene has opted for different strategies in the use of Darija to engage with an audience for whom Darija is their everyday language. I present examples of male rappers from different cities in Morocco to argue that on the one hand their choice creates a differentiated, masculine and tough social image, within which youth can find a place in society; on the other, however, analysis shows that adapting the language for other social groups that may find vulgarity offensive allows rappers to voice their message to a larger section of society.

Hachimi (2007, p.119) and Miller (2007, p.13; 2012, p.180) support the idea that a vulgar variant of Darija (the variant I here call 'street Darija' or *darija dyaal zan9a*) is perceived as popular, rural, as well as more virile and tough. Though research on the use of vulgar language in Darija by different gender groups is scant,¹⁴ during my fieldwork, rappers and young people informed me that certain words and

¹⁴ There is little music production from female Moroccan rappers, and instances where women do engage in the art are insufficient to elaborate an analysis that reflects different tendencies in language use. During my research (2010-2014), rapper Soultana, one of the most praised female rappers of the country, only released one track called "Sawt Lmra" (The Voice of Women), which contained no vulgar language.

gestures were perceived as vulgar and not appropriate for women. One such term was the word *m9awwed*, which can translate as ‘dope,’ ‘great,’ ‘cool’ ‘pimped’ or ‘fucked up,’ and is frequently used by rappers and Moroccan youth to express something they either regard with favor or, on the contrary, something they dislike. The word appears in an early track from rapper Muslim, “Zna9i Tanja”¹⁵ (Streets of Tangiers) (2005), in which he says “*Maytla3 mayhawed ana 3aref zhar m9awwed*” (With no ups and downs I know my luck is fucked up). Don Bigg also employs the word frequently, including in the song “Mgharba Tal Mout”¹⁶ (Moroccans Until Death) (2006), which starts by telling the beatmaker of this song Nores, that the beat is great: “Nores! Beat *m9awwed*” (Nores! Dope beat). The word is also included in a verse from the latest single “Mabghitch”¹⁷ (I Don’t Want) (2011) by the same artist, where he claims that unemployment is bad: “*chomage m9awwed*.” Don Bigg also uses the word in the negative sense, in the lyrics of the song “1983...2006” (2006) saying: “*Wesh hna m9awdin wala m9awda 3lina kolchi ka3i*” (Are we dope or are we fucked up?). Despite the different meanings, the word is considered a swearword and not appropriate for use publicly or in the context of the family, and when it is employed is done almost exclusively by men, thus conferring a sense of toughness onto the rapper.

Although vulgar language is not exclusively connected to Tangiers or Casablanca, where the rappers cited above are from, male rappers from these cities employ more swearwords compared to other rappers who use Darija from the cities of Meknes or Marrakech. Well-known groups such as H-Kayne from Meknes and

¹⁵ <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PVsRIJmJkFk> [Accessed May 23, 2014].

¹⁶ <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4MHTBkEpos8> [Accessed May 23, 2014].

¹⁷ <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D3GMgKehhk0> [Accessed May 23, 2014].

Fnaïre from Marrakech employ a clean Darija. Despite the fact that Ben-Layashi (2013, p.150) considers H-Kayne's language to be raw and their words harsh, they are amongst the rappers that do not use swear or curse words in their lyrics. In the documentary *I love hip hop in Morocco* (2007), members of H-Kayne point out that while US rappers are able to swear in their songs, this it is not possible in Morocco. Miller (2012, p. 179) claims, the use of vulgar language in the public arena transgresses the unspoken code of politeness and often causes indignation and embarrassment. This claim refers the country's social conventions that hold vulgar language as unacceptable (Miller 2012, p.179; Miller & Caubet 2012, p.4), a sentiment that is reflected in the official regulations of the press. Sections 5, 6 and 7 of the Press Code of 2003 deal with the prohibition and punishment of publications that offend public morality, which swearing comes under, and Article 60 penalizes whoever publicly performs songs or speeches that are contrary to morality and public morals.¹⁸ If rappers want their songs to be played on the radio or television, they must use a language that will be considered appropriate according to these regulations. In this respect, Hicham Abkari, who is president of the Moroccan Federation,¹⁹ director of the Mohammed VI Theatre in Casablanca, and former programmer of the Festival de Casablanca, has stated that "nowadays, singers sanitize their speech to make it exploitable on the radio, on television during sponsored programs" (Abkari 2008).

¹⁸ Article 60 : Sera puni d'un emprisonnement maximum d'un mois et d'une amende de 1.200 à 6.000 dirhams ou de l'une de ses deux peines seulement quiconque aura fait entendre publiquement, de mauvaise foi, des chants ou discours contraires à la moralité et aux mœurs publiques ou incite à la débauche ou aura publié une annonce ou correspondance de ce genre, quels qu'en soient les termes. (<http://adala.justice.gov.ma/production/html/Fr/41861.htm> [Accessed May 23, 2014]).

¹⁹ See note 16 on page 26.

The idea that swearing and cursing in the public sphere is offensive is not unique to Morocco. When discussing the rap scene in Tanzania, Alex Perullo (2005, p.96) suggests that rappers, fans, and radio announcers discourage cursing in both Kiswahili and English, as swearing is unacceptable in public. The Turkish rap scene, on the contrary, employs swearwords both in Turkish and English, though they are not tolerated for marketing purposes since they are banned by the Turkish Ministry of Culture (Solomon 2006, pp.5–6). In Turkey, this ban acts as a mark of distinction between the underground and the commercial scenes. Where those who do not include swear words are viable commercially, rappers who include swearwords in their lyrics do not get their music commercially released and only have recourse to alternative means of distributing their music such as websites or ‘informal’ record companies (Ibid). In Morocco, when it comes to broadcasting these songs on public media like the radio or television, rappers must supply clean versions, where swearwords and vulgar language have been eliminated. However, Don Bigg’s songs are frequently broadcast in the media and performed at festivals like *Mawazine*, which are majorly controlled by the state, indicating that artists who swear in their lyrics are not necessarily banned from the mainstream media or from music festivals organized under official patronage.

Rapper Mobydick also frequently employs vulgar language, as in the videos for the tracks “Checkmate”²⁰ (2011) where he flashes his middle finger in a clear reference to Don Bigg [Figure 3]:

²⁰ <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VxagfDYjHS4> [Accessed May 23, 2014].



Figure 3. Snapshot of video clip "Checkmate" (2011) by Mobydick

In the latter clip "Lmoutchoukistan"²¹ (2011), the rapper makes the gesture in the Moroccan way directing his middle finger towards the eye of his adversary, in this case, the camera [Figure 4]:



Figure 4. Snapshot of video clip "Lmoutchoukistan" (2011) by Mobydick

²¹ <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IL2zuE2VGag> [Accessed May 23, 2014].

The cases of Mobydick and Don Bigg points to the fact that swearing is formally condemned but informally allowed.

On the contrary, Muslim who employed vulgar language in his early works as above stated, has adapted his use of language in order to become more socially acceptable, as he told me in our interview:

Look, before, when we were young, we used to rap and from time to time we used to drop a few swearwords. But then, when, you see, you figure that your music is only heard by one generation, but doesn't touch other people, your rap is only heard in headphones you can't hear it loud in your house or something, but to me this was not to my advantage. I want to be heard but everybody, so if I want everybody to listen to me I won't lose anything. If with this word means 10 people hear me, I'll change it and then 20 or 30 people will, old and young, in the house and wherever else. It only requires me to change a word. (Muslim 2013, interview, June 26)²²

Muslim has changed his language in recent songs referred to by the newspaper *Akhbar Alyoum* (May 2, 2012) as *rap annaqī* (refined or clean rap). The restricted use of vulgar language in Muslim's latest work coincides with songs such as "Dounia Fania"²³ (The World is Ending) (2011) or "Law Kan Lwa9i3 Law7a"²⁴ (If Reality was a Canvas) (2011), which also include overt references to religion and where Muslim presents himself as conservative. With these songs, Muslim became

²² "Houa chouf, f louwel kouna kan rappiw, mohim marra marra 3adi, katkoun ba9i sghir, chi 7aja kat kharaj chi kelma chi 7aja vulgaire fhamti, walakin men ba3d kat welli kat chouf katl9a kay sem3ouk ghi wa7ed generation, katmchi ma ka touchichi chi nass akhrine fhamti, Rap dyalk kay welli ki tsmā3 ghi f cask wla, ma ki tsmā3ch, ma ki 9darch yakhdo ysem3o f ddar, ya3ni had l9dia hadi kanchoufha ana machi f sali7 dyali, ana khassni ysmā3ni koulchi, bach ysmā3ni koulchi maghadi ankhser walo ana, hadik lkemla kent ghadi n9olha, w ghadi ysem3oni 15 wla mohim 10 d nass, lokhrine ma ghadi ysem3ouhach, ana ghadi nbeddelha w ghadi ysem3ouni 20 wla 30 lkbir w sghir w f dar w finma kan, ghadi nbeddel ghi kelma we7da matalan, kount ghadi n9ol kelma ghadi nbeddelha b chi 7aja, lmouhim."

²³ http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-ju_13jfl5s [Accessed May 23, 2014].

²⁴ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1B6WNbjFka0> [Accessed April 11, 2014]

associated with Islamism, a thread that will be picked up in sections three of Chapter Four in this thesis.

Though it can be read in connection with the PJD conception of ‘clean art,’ Muslim’s agenda is clearly related to increasing his access to different social groups. Muslim has not only shaped his language restricting vulgar words, but also altered his northern Moroccan dialect into a kind of *koine* – or common language – easier to understand by Moroccans from across country. Some linguists consider that the Darija variant of Casablanca and Rabat as the new urban koine, and see it as imposing on the rest of the country (Moscoso García 2002, p.2; Miller 2007, p.11), though in a latter work, Miller (2012, p.180) found that this is not necessarily the case. In this respect, while early Muslim songs such as “Zna9i Tanja” (Streets of Tangiers) (2005) used more variations of the northern region dialect, a song like “Dounia Fania” is closer to this koine. A listen to the first song shows that it contains words found only in the north, like the verse “*Mdakham fihoum yen3as 3la kercho*” which includes the word *mdakham* meaning ‘great’ or ‘good’ used only in the northern region. Also signifying his regional heritage, Muslim uses the word *pobre*, meaning poor in Spanish, in some of his songs, tagging him as a resident of the regions that were once under Spanish control. This sort of usage of Spanish is absent in the songs of rappers from other parts of Morocco like Casablanca, Meknes or Marrakech.²⁵ Muslim uses the word in a number of songs, like in “Zna9i Tanja” “*T3emlo f7al pobre kifach y7adar khobzo*” (Learn from the poor how they get their bread); in “Dounia Fania” where he sings “*3andek mochkil kayn li pobre 3ando*

²⁵ To this list we must exclude the term *moutchou* used by Mobydick in Rabat and with an alleged Spanish origin from the word *muchacho*. This use is further analysed in Chapter Five section four.

kodia” (do you have problems? poor people have a hill); and in “Mour Sour”²⁶ (Behind the Wall) (2008) “*w pobre meg3our*” (And the poor is oppressed). Beyond the single word, however, in “Dounia Fania,” there is no other hint of northern dialect, making the lyrics comprehensible for the rest of the regions in Morocco. The chorus for example goes as follows:

Mal bnadem ghir mezroub	What’s happening with the people us that they are in a rush
Jarri mor serab w kdoub	They run after mirages and lies
wel7ayat masha jaria	Life goes by fast
jma3na fiha ghir dnoub	We gather only the bad things
nfoussna mabghia toub	Our soul doesn’t want to repent
raha dounia fania	The world is ending

These lines show an absence of local language specificities due, to some extent, to its theme of social illnesses such as materialism, the speed of contemporary life, and lack of ethics, which is of a wider and national focus. And while he uses both northern slang, and ‘clean’ language, he also makes use of MSA. For example in the chorus of the song “Law Kan Lwa9i3 Law7a,” Muslim employs words from MSA exclusively:

nrssm nhar wlil	I paint day and night
nrssm ahlami alwan tsil	I paint my dreams with colors that flows
whata ida kan lawn 9lil	Even though there are few colors
nrssm bdami hta lakhir mil	I’ll paint with my blood until the last mile
hta l2akhir mil	until the last mile

²⁶ <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eXGBueMyW6w> [Accessed May 7, 2014].

In both songs, Muslim delivers his message not only to every Moroccan, but also to all Arabic-speaking youth. Though he still employs vocabulary influenced by the northern variant using more words in Spanish than French, Arabic dominates his lyrics. Therefore, Muslim's lyrics not only indicate the use of a common Darija, but also the tendency to employ a language closer to MSA and communicate beyond the national borders.

Despite this criticism, street Darija and its use of swearwords and vulgar language is to a great extent accepted among young people. As I observed during my time spent with rappers during my fieldwork, gestures like the middle finger and swearing in Darija occur in daily interactions amongst youth. While most cursing is a reaction to anger or frustration (Allan & Burridge 2006, p.78), they also functions as a form of social identification among youth (Abdel-Jawad 2000, p.221). Even if mainly male rappers swear in their lyrics, young women belong to this group as an active part of the audience, by singing along in concerts for example, as I observed during my time in the field. Thus, through swearwords both rappers and youth can create a social group within the public sphere and mark themselves off from previous generations and other contemporary music genres.

In delineating a social group for young people, rappers use vulgar language in their lyrics as a way to connect to their social 'reality.' In other words, as Miller suggests "many young artists claim to look for a 'real' or 'everyday' language that reflects the harsh reality of their lives and want to break away from a 'sanitized' Darija" (2012, p. 179). In the same vein, Don Bigg declares:

We express ourselves best in our native language, even if we've perfectly mastered other languages. Using Darija also puts an end to taboos. We have the habit of talking about a lot of things in French, but of reading them in classical Arabic. We should be proud of our dialect. While certain people think that our dialect is not good for expression, I think that it's a question of habit and self-confidence. We should be proud of who we are and be ourselves. (Don Bigg 2007)

Don Bigg here rejects a sugarcoated reflection of reality free from vulgarity, and asserts his belief that this form of expression is a typical case of hypocrisy, in particular where the use of swearwords in other languages is socially acceptable in Morocco:

I consider that is hypocritical that some get on their high horses to denounce my supposedly vulgar words. I wonder why they never said anything about French and American films that we have always watched on TV, listening to words like *putain*, *merde*, *enculés*, fuck and so on. I have never understood why the word slut does not have the same effect as *9a7ba*, which is simply the translation into Darija. (Caubet 2005, p.239)

In fact, the rapper employs the word “*9a7ba*” at the start of the track “Casanegra”²⁷ (2009): “*Kharj ltri9 wld l97ba ygolo lih dima kimil*” (Not straight, son of a bitch that's how they call him). Swearwords provide rappers a connection to everyday life as is a way of relating to the ‘real’ life. So, rappers who do not swear in their songs are perceived as though they do not truly engage with urban youth. During my interview with Mobydick I asked him if the difference in the use of vulgar language as a part of lyrics was something that could be put down to the geographic origin of the artist:

²⁷ <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=67-EvFBDYOo> [Accessed May 23, 2014].

Moreno: is the use of swearwords a way of identifying with the 'street' and creating a social group?

Mobydick: It's the new Morocco, that's right, it's necessary that those that are out in the street find themselves in your text.

Moreno: But for example H-Kayne don't swear in their songs, is this because the language in Meknes is different?

Mobydick: There is no difference between Meknes and other cities... You know, at the beginning we understood why artists didn't swear, we understood it, but they should do it one day, it's a kind of 'coming out,' you know what I mean? They should do it. It's like this. It's a bit like the US. I can't allow that Moroccans listen to Eminem, listen to Dr.

DRE or listen to 50 Cent. No, I want Moroccans to listen to Mobydick, I want Moroccans listen to DROS, and so we're going to give these Moroccans what they want to listen to: insults, music and texts. (Mobydick 2013, interview, July 5)²⁸

Although the first rappers, like H-Kayne, to enter the officially regulated cultural field feared censure, Mobydick believes that now it is mandatory to communicate with the audience in their own language and build a social group. Mobydick believes that rappers need to identify with the street and vice versa.

Both street Darija and clean Darija allow rappers to gain an audience whether it is in the form of a youth social group or a larger spectrum of society. Either language grouping has strategies within which artists can engage with a wide

²⁸ "Moreno : *Les gros mots, c'est un manière d'être 'street', de créer un group ?*; Mobydick : *C'est le nouveau Maroc ! C'est ça, Ce qui est dehors dans la rue, Il faut que les gens dans la rue se retrouvent dans ton texte.* ; Moreno : *Mais par exemple H-Kayne ne dis pas de gros mots dans ces morceaux, c'est parce que la parlé de Meknes est différent...* ; Mobydick : *Il n'y a pas de différence entre Meknes... Tu sais, au début on comprenait pourquoi les artistes ils disaient pas les gros mots, on comprenait, mais il faut qu'un jour ils fassent le truc, c'est un espèce de coming out, tu vois ? Il faut qu'ils fassent le truc. C'est ça, c'est un peu comme à l'américain, je ne peux pas moi laisser par exemple un Marocain écouter Eminem ou alors écouter Dr DRE ou alors écouter 50 Cent, non, je voudrais que les Marocains écoutent Mobydick, je voudrais que les Marocains écoutent DROS, donc on va donner a ses Marocains ce qu'ils veulent écouter : les insultes, la musique, les textes."*

segment of Moroccan society that use Darija as their everyday language. Although Mobydick and Don Bigg believe there is a need to engage with youth in a ‘real’ way, that is, to use the language they use in their daily lives, Muslim takes into consideration the need to include other sections of society in order to gain power. In this sense, artists learn to work within this particular language topography. While both variants of Darija, street and refined, may be considered part of a lyric style understood as an act of engagement with different sectors of society, rappers that employ street language like Don Bigg or Mobydick are often the ones perceived as ‘rebellious,’ while those that restrain the use of vulgar language are not.²⁹ The next section takes the case study of Don Bigg to demonstrate that despite the association of street Darija with engaging socially and politically with local youth, the use of vulgar language per se cannot be equated with resistance.

3. Co-opting Resistance

Don Bigg has been a controversial rapper since he released his first album *Mgharba Tal Mout* (Moroccans Until Death) in 2006. This album enjoyed huge success among the youth and some Moroccan French language media, with an article praising the album appearing in *TelQuel* (September 9, 2006)³⁰ entitled “Bigg. Le plus fort.” *Mgharba Tal Mout* contains songs such as “Bladi Blad”³¹ (My Country is a Country) (2006), which is highly critical of the country’s social and political system. Since the release of this album, however, Don Bigg’s lyrics have become more conventional and more aligned with the official narrative. The rapper recently condemned the pro-

²⁹ Chapter Four and Five further elaborate on the construction of rebellious and dissident rappers.

³⁰ http://m.telquel-online.com/archives/238/arts1_238.shtml [Accessed July 23, 2014].

³¹ <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T-M2UIRHq0> [Accessed May 7, 2014].

democracy 20 February Movement (M20F),³² which has prompted accusations of co-optation by the Makhzen (Boum 2012b, p.16; Miller & Caubet 2012, p.9). In this section, I argue that this perception of cooptation is accentuated by the fact that Don Bigg has constructed his cultural production as rebellious, revolutionary and strongly related to youth struggle.

At the beginning of his career, Don Bigg was known simply as Bigg aka El Khasser (The Rotten), however, he changed this name and in his second album, *Byad ou K7al* (Black or White) (2009) he appeared as Don Bigg. This album was not as successful as his first, and its review in *TelQuel* called it “less impulsive than *Mgharba Tal Mout*, we don’t hear the guts of the singer” (January 22, 2010).³³ Before the release of this second album, Don Bigg was criticized for his participation in the seventh national youth congress (2007) of the Union Sociale des Forces Populaires (USPF), one of the most influential of the left wing parties that was part of the coalition governments from 1998 to 2011. Although groups considered politically engaged such as Nass El Ghiwane and Hoba Hoba Spirit also took part in this event, Don Bigg was the main focus of criticism for ‘selling out.’³⁴ The criticism was that he was indulging in the opulence bestowed by a political party, as well as to the music market and other powerful cultural actors. Other rappers like H-Kayne were invited, but refused to attend fearing that performing for a political party would make them lose their independence as artists. However, in 2008 the king gave H-

³² The 20 February Movement is a pro-democracy movement that sprung up in 2011 to agitate for a constitutional monarchy, a change in the constitution, the dismissing of the cabinet; the dissolution of parliament; the installing of an independent judiciary; the setting up of corruption trials; making Tamazight an official language alongside Arabic; and the freeing of all political prisoners. The fourth section of Chapter Three discusses the social and political tension between M20F and different members of the Moroccan rap and cultural scenes.

³³ http://www.telquel-online.com/archives/408/mage_culture_408.shtml [Accessed July 23, 2014].

³⁴ For example, the title of this online article only makes reference to Don Bigg “Bigg chez l’USFP: Le rap dérape?” <http://www.bladi.net/bigg-usfp-rap.html> [Accessed May 7, 2014].

Kayne and Hoba Hoba Spirit, among other artists, a check for 250,000 dirhams (£17,672) after their participation in *Mawazine* (*Aujourd'hui Le Maroc* June 19, 2009).³⁵ The accusations of co-option increased later particularly in three occasions: first, during the February 20 demonstrations in 2011 when the rapper criticized the demonstrators (Miller & Caubet 2012, p.9); second, during the summer of 2013 when the rapper was invited to dine at the Royal Palace to celebrate la fête du Trône (Throne Day);³⁶ and third, later when he received a Royal Medal.³⁷ Despite the fact that other rappers for example the rap groups H-Kayne or Fnaïre have received royal medals and invitations to the palace, Don Bigg became a symbol of the co-opted rapper.



Figure 5. Cartoon presenting Don Bigg as a co-opted rapper

³⁵ Other Moroccan artists that participated in that year's edition of *Mawazine* also received this cheque.

³⁶ <http://www.h24info.ma/maroc/critique-don-bigg-fier-davoir-ete-lininvite-du-palais> [Accessed May 7, 2014].

³⁷ <http://hespress.com/orbites/87144.html> [Accessed May 7, 2014].

The perception of Don Bigg as an artist co-opted by the Makhzen is also reflected in a cartoon published on a Moroccan online news site [Figure 5].³⁸ The cartoon shows Don Bigg (tagged as “small”) drawn as a wind-up toy on a stage below which is written “the festival of people’s money.” On the stage Don Bigg is shown to sing “put your hands up, and keep them up, put your hands up.” In the audience, there is a young man, with a t-shirt that reads “son of the people,” holding up his hands and praising the rapper: “yeah, dope, Khasser,” which is a play on the rapper’s Arabic nickname meaning “rotten.” As the article in *TelQuel* (January 22, 2010) suggests, the transition from El Khasser to Don Bigg is meaningful as this change of names embodies the changes in the rapper’s music production and perception of society and politics. While the fan has his hands up, a hand slips into his pocket and the alleged robber says “quick, quick, while he’s distracted.” In the background, an old man is selling all kinds of drugs, cigarettes and nuts. This scene not only represents Don Bigg as a puppet of power, but also confirms the suspicion that music festivals like *Mawazine* are using people’s money to promote Makhzen artists. Moreover, the cartoon establishes the connection between public spaces and rappers by holding artists and music festivals accountable for spending people’s money. A thorough criticism of an artist seen as co-opted, the cartoon does not at all see the festival (despite the money spent) as a stage to claim back public spaces for self-expression.

³⁸ The cartoon was published on the news website Hibapress (<http://www.hibapress.com/details-31453.html> [Accessed May 7, 2014]), as well as on other webpages (see for example <http://abdo-simo-x.webobo.biz/>) and by researchers Miller & Caubet (2012). The author of the cartoon signs as “Imād,” however, my attempts during fieldwork (2011-2013) to contact him or her proved unsuccessful.

In labeling Don Bigg's music as 'resistant,' mainly in terms of social disparities perpetuated and unresolved by the state (See Introduction), two songs provide evidence of the rappers capitalization on language and urban spaces to associate himself with a tradition of cultural resistance and the urban unprivileged youth inherited from the cultural production which flourished during the 1970s in the poor neighborhood of Hay Mohammadi in Casablanca. The first this section will look at is "Mgharba Tal Mout"³⁹ (Moroccans Until Death) (2006) from his first album of the same name *Mgharba Tal Mout* (2006) and his most controversial single "Mabghitch"⁴⁰ (I Don't Want To) (2011). The first track engages with everyday life and the city's neighborhoods to assert the rapper's love of his city and nation making his music part from a music cultural tradition that connects Casablanca to the country's culture of resistance. The second track changes Don Bigg's narrative from engaging everyday experiences to focusing on the political state of the nation hindering his connection with urban unprivileged youth and the power of his songs as resistant music production.

The song "Mgharba Tal Mout" deals with his daily life in his city, Casablanca. Don Bigg relates the difficulties of his daily life, including being a rapper and the release of his album. The rapper establishes his connection with Casablanca at the end of the track by naming all the neighborhoods of the city and emphasizing their importance:

Moroccans until death/For all old dusty neighborhoods/Casablanca today, brought out for
you Bigg/With you, and for you/Roches Noires, Hay Mohammadi, Barnoussi, Beau

³⁹ <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4MHTBkEpos8> [Accessed May 7, 2014].

⁴⁰ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D3GMgKehhk0> [Accessed April 10, 2014].

Séjour, Bachkou, Ain Sbaa, Bin Lemdoune, Medina Qadima, Derb Ghallef, Sidi Othman, Hay My Rchid, Sbata, Maarif, Hay Hassani, Ain Chock, Hay Inara, Derb Sultan.⁴¹

The first place named by Don Bigg is Roches Noires, where he grew up. Although it is near the poor neighborhood of Hay Mohammadi, Roches Noires is generally understood to be one for middle-class families.⁴² In the song, the rapper also references other locations within Casablanca like the well-known Sa'ada⁴³ cinema located in Hay Mohammadi: "Guys standing next to Sa'ada are bouncing."⁴⁴ The rapper uses the famous cinema to bring in the symbol poverty and resistance that the neighborhood signifies and associates himself with the important figures of Moroccan cultural life including groups like Nass El Ghiwane, Lamchaheb or Tagadda. As he construct his artistic persona, Don Bigg uses not only these references to make strategic and effective use of places in the city that connects him with Nass El Ghiwane and a discourse of artistic resistance. In these first lyrics the rapper associates himself with a poor neighborhood that is culturally marked by renowned music groups. As the rapper grew up in a middle class area, affiliating himself to part of the urban unprivileged allows Don Bigg to gain popularity and sell his product as something that comments on or communes with the marginalized. Creating an artistic profile connected to the young urban unprivileged – as I argue further in Chapter Five – shows the attempt of Don Bigg to be perceived as an

⁴¹ "Mgharba Tal Lmout/Lga3 drouba lmghabrine, fhamtini/Casablanca lyoun, kharjat likoum Bigg/M3akom, w likoum/Roche Noire, L7ay Lmo7ammadi, Barnoussi, Beau Séjour, Bachkou, Ain Sbaa, Bin Lemdoune, Lmdina L9dima, Derb Ghallef, Sidi Othman, 7ay My Rchid, Sbata, Lmaarif, 7ay 7assani, Ain Cho9, L7ay L7assani, Derb Sultan."

⁴² Don Bigg's official webpage launched in 2011 states that the rapper belongs to a middle-class family, however, this biography does not make reference the neighborhood where he grew up (<http://www.donbiggofficial.com/index.php?page=bio> [Accessed August 30, 2013]).

⁴³ An article on the newspaper *La Vie Éco* (March 7, 2008) describes the Sa'ada cinema together with *Dar Chabab* (Youth House) or the field Al Hofra as mythical places in this neighborhood (<http://www.lavieeco.com/news/societe/hay-mohammadi-memoire-d-un-quartier-mythique-6580.html> [Accessed May 23, 2014]).

⁴⁴ "Drari mser7a 7da Sa3ada ssmoum fiha katkazz."

‘authentic’ and ‘real’ artist, that is, able to transmit and to engage with the social reality of Moroccan youth’s everyday lives.⁴⁵

This idea also emerges in Don Bigg’s use of a Nass El Ghiwane’s song at the end of the track “Bladi Blad” (My Country is a Country) (2006). Don Bigg in a collaboration with rapper Alfaress include in this song one of Nass El Ghiwane’s most popular songs called “Lbtana” (The Sheep’s Hide) (n.d.).⁴⁶ The lyrics come from the introduction of the song, which goes as follows: “Slaves of money, slaves of money, Oh you stone hearts/We are living the life of the flea in the sheep’s hide/There’s a huge difference between apple and pomegranate/But what’s the difference between you, and you, and you and me!”⁴⁷ Although it is believed that this song had a ‘Political’ meaning in which Nass El Ghiwane denounced Hassan II’s oppression, Omar Sayyed stated in an interview that the song had no such political agenda (Muhanna & Sayyed 2003, p.146). As Sayyed explained, this song related to the fact that “the world of our grandparents was disappearing – or had disappeared already – and as much as we thought that we were on our way to something better, we had also lost something enormous” (Ibid). Despite Omar Sayyed’s opposition to a political interpretation, the song is political in the sense that it deals with the changes in the country: “We – Moroccans, our generation – were living within the remains of something that no longer exists” (Ibid). In this sense, the song is not only present political criticism, but social criticism too as it tries to situate Moroccans within their current context between the ‘old’ Morocco and the ‘new’ one, and question those

⁴⁵ Chapter Five deals with the idea of the ‘authentic’ rapper linked to creating an artistic profile connected to marginality and political resistance.

⁴⁶ Although the song is released on online music platforms like iTunes in 2002, the song was published much earlier during the 1970s. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xndJlgmQ5lY> [Accessed July 8, 2014].

⁴⁷ “*3bid sank, 3bid sank l’me3boud ya gloub le7jar/3aychine 3icht debbana f’lbtana/Rah far9 3dim bin teffa7 w rommana/Wachmen far9 bin nta, wnta, wnta w ana!*”

who have benefited from the new Morocco at the expense of the masses (Ibid). The last sentence of the skit emphasizes the social distinctions that the rappers, Don Bigg and Alfaress, have denounced throughout the rest of the song, but also the differences between older and younger generations. Using a song from such an important group in contemporary Moroccan culture not only connects Don Bigg and Alfaress to their national past, but also binds them to a very specific discourse on resistance and the power of the people embodied by Nass El Ghiwane's legacy as, despite Sayyed's explanations, the song was received as a 'Political' confrontation against the king.⁴⁸ The argument here is that despite the fact that Don Bigg presents himself as the voice of the poor and is portrayed as such by the magazine *TelQuel*, his narrative is shaped as resistant because of his association to a local cultural tradition of dissent both through his lyrics and the images he has used to promote his cultural production.

Don Bigg exploits the connection with Nass El Ghiwane beyond his lyrics. The rapper employs an image of Nass El Ghiwane in the image he used to promote his new recording label and studio, DBF Productions:



Figure 6. Cover image of DBF Studios

⁴⁸ The fusion group Hoba Hoba Spirit also employs parts of a song of Nass El Ghiwane in his song "Fin Ghadi Biya Khouya."

This picture also references important locations of Casablanca: the Hassan II Mosque, the Twin Centre, the wall of the old medina and the famous cupola in United Nations square. In the picture, Nass El Ghiwane appears as an image on the wall of the old medina, emphasizing the importance of this group in the rapper's musical heritage. This association with Moroccan popular music and its identification with the working class give Don Bigg credibility and 'authenticity' as a Moroccan rapper and allows him to connect with the narrative of resistance of Nass El Ghiwane praised by a large sector of the Moroccan society. Yet, a social and political 'resistance' narrative in Don Bigg, as this section suggests, does not add any substantial criticisms remaining behind the 'red lines.' In Morocco, these 'red lines' include criticism to the Monarchy, Islam, and challenges to Morocco's territorial integrity, especially regarding sovereignty over the Western Sahara (Smith & Loudiy 2005, pp.1070–1071).

In spite of Don Bigg's rebellious image built through language and popular urban signifiers, the rapper has been criticized for his attack on the M20F movement. Miller and Caubet (2012) use the narrative of Nass El Ghiwane, as an example of artistic resistance, to criticize the rappers' lack of involvement with the pro-democracy M20F. Miller and Caubet claim that the artists of the 'new' urban scene like Bigg present a "lucid vision of their own country, which they love and want to improve" (Ibid, p.6), they question the commitment of these artists to the M20F (Ibid, p.8). Don Bigg is the focus of these commentaries, owing to his reaction to the M20F in his song and a video clip "Mabghitch" (I Don't Want To) (2011).⁴⁹ The song narrates the countries malaises including political corruption, lack of

⁴⁹ <http://eplume.wordpress.com/2011/08/08/le-mouvement-du-20-fevrier-don-bigg-et-le-clap-de-fin/> [Accessed May 7, 2014]; <http://www.demainonline.com/2013/03/02/le-rappeur-don-bigg-tombe-le-masque/> [Accessed May 7, 2014].

employment and opportunities for youth fulfill their dreams. The criticisms to the M20F emerge when the rappers claims that he does not want that this movement represents him and control the country. Don Bigg constructs the M20F in the same terms as the Makhzen by describing them as atheists, Islamists and the civil society:

Who will represent people? Who will represent people? Is it these four boys who eat Ramadan like it was a joke? Or a bunch of Islamists? Or a bunch of bearded guys? Or a bunch of bearded guys who are coming to make people unbelievers? Who will save jobless? Who will save jobless? Is it a journalist who sells you half ignorance and half empty words? Or a bunch of bearded guys? Ey! bunch of bearded guys? Or a bunch of bearded guys that use religion in a fake manner?⁵⁰

In these lines, the civil society is embodied in oppositional journalists referring indirectly to Rachid Nini, a Moroccan journalist imprisoned for a year in 2011 convicted for trying to discredit and influence a court and allegedly publishing untrue criminal offences.⁵¹ Nini denounced music festivals and specifically Don Bigg for contributing to co-opt younger generations.⁵² Don Bigg, in turn, directly names Nini in a freestyle song, a type of song often created without title or chorus and not included in the albums of artists, telling him to go to sleep.⁵³ Yet, after his year in jail, Nini is suspected of siding with the Makhzen as his criticism are now directed to the PJD and not members of the Makhzen.⁵⁴ Don Bigg, considers “Mabghitch” a

⁵⁰ “*chkoun li ghay mettal cha3b? chkoun li ghay mettal cha3b? wach 4 dial l'brahech li wakline ramdan la3b? wella rba3a dial l7aya? wella rba3a dial l7aya? wella rba3a dial l7aya li jayne y kafro cha3b? chkoun li ghaymade lal 3atel? chkoun li ghaymede lal 3atel? wach sa7afi kay bi3 likom noss kalakh o noss tratem? wella rba3a dial l7aya? ey Rba3a dial l7aya? wella rba3a dial l7aya kay rekbo 3la dine batel.*”

⁵¹ <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/africa/2012/04/20124281889790655.html> [Accessed July 26, 2014]).

⁵² <http://blafrancia.wordpress.com/nini/biggy/> [Accessed July 26, 2014]; http://mideast.foreignpolicy.com/posts/2010/08/27/moroccos_burgeoning_musical_scene%20 [Accessed July 26, 2014].

⁵³ https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=paNVV-_j5V0 [Accessed July 26, 2014].

⁵⁴ <http://goo.gl/wOVRl0> [Accessed July 26, 2014]

song that responds to and engages with the MENA uprisings: “It’s a shout, a protest, an SOS, it describes everything that’s happening in Morocco, including corruption, prostitution, depravity...”⁵⁵ The song was inspired by a collection of factors, but the rapper explains, “the trigger was the 20 of February.”⁵⁶ In the chorus of the song Don Bigg repeats four times “I don’t want, to be set up, I want and I want, to push my country up,”⁵⁷ referring to the fact that he does not want Morocco to be led by the M20F. The rapper employs the words “*dar lina*,” which are not vulgar as such, but are used in street talk to mean “fucked up” as well as “set up.” Despite Don Bigg’s vulgar language, reference to Nass El Ghiwane in the track “Mgharba Tal Mout,” and the rapper’s visual imagery, “Mabghitich” suggest an absence of political criticism in Don Bigg’s work. Although Don Bigg refers to Hay Mohammadi as a signifier of urban unprivileged resistance, by opposing the M20F and echoing the Makhzen’s voice in this event, the rapper side with the Makhzen proving his so-constructed engagement as misleading.

Therefore, youth urban cultural forms that denote resistance to the state become a target for the Makhzen’s strategy to co-opt and thus control urban youth. The next section suggests, the funding of music festivals and rap video clips as well as the control over the artists’ copyrights aids the Makhzen in this endeavor. The struggle over the Moroccan cultural field can be traced through the rappers’ actions to fight for artists’ rights. Moroccan rappers and artists who wish to free their music production from the Makhzen struggle to earn their income by copyrighting their

⁵⁵ “*C’est un coup de gueule, c’est contestataire, c’est un SOS, ça relate tous les faits qui a au Maroc, notamment la corruption, la prostitution, la dépravation...*” (http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ha9i5Bcx_EI [Accessed October 27, 2013]).

⁵⁶ “*Le déclic c’était le 20 Février.*”

⁵⁷ “*Ma Bghitch, y dar lina, Bghit o Bghit, nhaz l’blad.*”

work. Music, specially rap, as the following section claims, becomes a battlefield between strategies of domination and resistance not only staged in music production itself, but through the role of economics in the cultural field.

4. Strategies of Cultural Control

In the first decade of the new millennium, urban spaces in Morocco have experienced a boom in annual music festivals, which has largely been the result of the cultural policies of Moroccan local councils, governmental bodies and NGOs (Belghazi 2006, p.101). The control over music festivals has led researchers such as Taieb Belghazi (2006), and later Aomar Boum (2012a; 2012b; 2013) and Samir Ben-Layashi (2013), to claim that the Makhzen are working to co-opt urban youth culture through them. Music festivals cover a wide variety of political, economic and cultural purposes (Belghazi 2006, p.97; El Maarouf 2013, p.5). Socially, the idea of promoting big annual music festivals can be framed within the notion of *tanfis* (Wedeen 1999, p.88) or *tanaffus* (Cooke 2007, p.72). As Miriam Cooke claims, Syrians suggest that the government provides a space for controlled opposition in which the population is allowed to breathe (or at least has that impression). Cooke describes *tanaffus* as:

a moment for sharing unbelief and awareness of injustice; it produces pleasurable release of pent-up pressure. Some have pointed to the double bind of *tanaffus*. On the one hand, it marks the survival of a collective consciousness of injustice, that I am not alone in my awareness of stifling oppression and moral betrayal. On the other hand, the anxious reader or spectator can breathe deeply for a moment and then return to life as it was without thinking about changing it. This is the danger of *tanaffus*: it allows injustice to persist. (2007, p.72)

In practice, music festivals in Morocco are moments of liberation from everyday oppression. People and artists relish these music festivals as an opportunity to escape from their ordinary lives. Cultural manager Salah Malouli recently stated, “I’ve never been convinced that a festival could change mentalities”⁵⁸ (*TelQuel* October 4, 2013, p.44). Malouli argues that culture in Morocco “is based on festivals and there is nothing more during all the year” (2011, interview, December 8).⁵⁹ Malouli suggests that festivals provide a controlled space for a momentary sense of liberation, but do not involve social or political change. However, these moments of freedom are also the only way artists can capitalize on their music, since the sole income of Morocco’s musicians is through music festivals (*TelQuel* April 18, 2012).⁶⁰ In other words, festivals not only provide a spiritual release, but also serve as the sole source of income for artists.

Other sources of income namely copyrights are also controlled by the state. In Morocco, only a few artists receive their royalties from the Moroccan Copyright Office, that is, the BMDA (Bureau Marocain du Droit d’Auteur), which is dependent on the Ministry of Communication.⁶¹ Despite the existence of the BMDA, new artists find it very challenging to receive income from the media that uses their music (*The New York Times* June 6, 2012). As the artist Oum declared to *TelQuel*, “Releasing an album in Morocco is a real proof of cultural activism. It’s almost financial suicide for the artist since it is never profitable” (April 18, 2012). During my fieldwork in Morocco, I visited the BMDA offices in Rabat and Casablanca with the rapper Dizzy

⁵⁸ “*Je n’ai jamais été convaincu qu’un festival pouvait changer les mentalités.*”

⁵⁹ “*...se basa en festivales, no hay nada durante todo el año.*”

⁶⁰ <http://www.telquel-online.com/Culture/Mag-Culture/musique-cherche-studio-desesperement/518> [Accessed July 23, 2014].

⁶¹ <http://www.bmdav.org/> [Accessed November 1, 2013].

DROS to find out how artists could register their music in order to receive royalties.⁶² In Rabat, the person in charge was absent from the office and no one was able to tell us which day we could come back. We went to the office in Casablanca, but the responsible individual was not there. A few days later, Dizzy DROS went back to the office and gave the official the paperwork he had downloaded from their webpage. The official did not recognize the documents and asked him where he had obtained them. Then he gave Dizzy DROS other papers to fill in and told him they required attachments so it would be better to take them directly to Rabat. Dizzy DROS went back to Rabat with one of his CDs and the required paperwork. This included his birth certificate, a legalized copy of his ID, his CD with the lyrics printed out, and a certificate from Hit Radio confirming that they play his songs.⁶³ However, the person in charge in the Rabat office told him that the song lyrics had to be written by hand and that they also required the scores. The Rabat BMDA official added that the whole process could take up to two years. This might explain Jeffrey Callen's (2006, p.199) findings, that the BMDA has only registered 2,000 artists, which includes not just musicians but writers, composers, and screenwriters. The inefficiency of the BMDA leads to the impoverishment of the artists and to the devaluation of their artistic production (Callen 2006, p.199).

In order to guide young musicians in this aspect of their careers, Boultek organized a series of workshops in November 2012 where the manager of the renowned Moroccan rock group Houssa, Sarah Hajblum focused on the situation of copyright in Morocco. Hajblum recommended that as long as the copyright situation

⁶² Dizzy DROS and I visited the BMDA offices between August and September 2012.

⁶³ At that time, Dizzy DROS had had two of his singles playing in Hit Radio since the end of 2011; DROS' first album was released in November 2013 and also played on Hit Radio.

in Morocco was not solved, artists should search for alternatives such as joining the SACEM, the French Association for Authors, Composers and Publishers of Music (Société des Auteurs, Compositeurs et Editeurs de Musique),⁶⁴ which unlike the BMDA is a private institution. The president of the cultural association Racines⁶⁵ has also commented on the issue, and said he believed that Morocco should follow the French example (*TelQuel* April 30, 2012).⁶⁶ However, the dependence of the BMDA on the government was assured in 1965 through a decree that claimed the BMDA to be the only institution responsible for receiving and delivering the author's copyright (Ibid). An article in *TelQuel* (November 1, 2012)⁶⁷ proved my experience with Dizzy DROS was a common one. The article, published during these workshops in Casablanca, explained that despite the 13 million dirhams (£934,654) allotted to the BMDA in 2012 the situation has not changed. The director of the BMDA claimed that there was a contract signed with the Ministry of Communication to re-structure the office between 2009 and 2012. In 2012, the director of BMDA director selected Othman Benhami, a member of H-Kayne, to represent artists in a debate about copyright on the 2M TV show "Niqach 2.0."⁶⁸ A member of H-Kayne was elected because of the group's lack of criticism of the state (See Chapter Three). Therefore, the BMDA was able to create an illusion of commitment to the artists' demands. However, the experience with DROS anecdotally highlights the fact that the BMDA is understaffed and that there is a lack of coordination between the Rabat and

⁶⁴ <http://www.sacem.fr/cms/home?pop=1> [Accessed November 1, 2013].

⁶⁵ Racines is an independent cultural association created in 2010 in Casablanca to develop and promote the creative industry and cooperation across Africa (<http://www.racines.ma/node/28> [Accessed July 8, 2014]).

⁶⁶ <http://www.telquel-online.com/Culture/Mag-Culture/Debat-mon-%25C5%2593uvre-ma-proprete/520> [Accessed July 23, 2014].

⁶⁷ http://telquel.ma/2012/11/01/Mag-Droits-d-auteur-Operation-commando_542_4817 [Accessed July 23, 2014].

⁶⁸ http://www.dailymotion.com/video/xpp0vt_3eme-emission-niaqch-2-0-du-25-mars-2012-sur-2m_news [Accessed November 1, 2013].

Casablanca offices. According to the president of the producers' guild in Morocco, Sarim Fassi-Fihri, Morocco has signed international treaties on copyright and there are many laws meant to ensure that authors get their money (*The New York Times* June 6, 2012).⁶⁹ However, he also admits that even if the BMDA has been around for decades, it has not been monitored and there is no way of knowing where the money has gone (Ibid). As Alami suggests in her article in *The New York Times*, "while some famous artists have been receiving regular royalties, others have received nothing" (June 6, 2012). Moreover, instead of copyrights, the Makhzen arbitrarily hands out *grimmas*, that is, licenses for buses, taxis and other businesses to assist their chosen artists financially. Therefore, the incompetence of the people working at the BMDA offices is a reflection not only of the lack of transparency on the BMDA's side, but of the absence of political will to solve this problem. As to the politics of copyright in Morocco, Sarah Hajblum attests, "Do not be fooled, there is a real political will not to resolve the situation" (*TelQuel* November 1, 2012).

The state strategy of restricting copyright to keep artists vulnerable to political exploitation is not unique to Morocco. Anne Schumann suggests a similar situation in the case of the Ivorian crisis (2002-2007) during Gbabo's regime (2013, p.448). In this article, Schumann (2013) explores the intersection between the rise of patriotic music and the struggle of musicians to gain control of their music in the Ivory Coast. As Schumann explains, a new generation of political actors found in popular music a tool to promote patriotic feelings in order to fight rebels and France, its former colonizer (2013, p.442). Significantly, Schumann's article argues research on African popular culture has downplayed the role of the state and economics in the

⁶⁹ http://www.nytimes.com/2012/06/07/world/middleeast/moroccan-artists-earn-applause-but-little-in-royalties.html?_r=1&smid=fb-share [Accessed July 23, 2014)].

production and co-option of popular culture (Ibid, p. 443). However, the ability to earn an income including through copyrights is key in the production of popular culture. In this respect, Morocco is no exception in the region, as the role of the state as the patron of the arts, together with the lack of political action to maintain artistic freedom, bestow on the Makhzen the power to decide on the artists who are allowed to survive in the cultural field. Therefore, the never-ending copyright problem and the handing out of grimmis is a tool to control cultural production as artists are unable to survive without the Makhzen's support.

The state's use of music as a tool of social control may be read through the following cartoon that accuses music festivals of stealing the people's money (See also El Maarouf 2013, p.4) [Figure 7].⁷⁰



Figure 7. Cartoon criticizing Festival Mawazine

⁷⁰ <https://www.facebook.com/photo.php?fbid=355068621241556&set=pb.101060159975738.-2207520000.1358852113&type=3&theater> [Accessed January 22, 2013].

This cartoon published on an anti-*Mawazine* page shows how *Mawazine* has caused a great deal of controversy mainly because of accusations that they have benefited, without transparency, from private and public funding.⁷¹ An article in *TelQuel* (June 5, 2010)⁷² called “Mawazine. Le Miracle Royal” suggests that after the 2005 success of the *Festival de Casablanca*, the King also wanted Rabat to have a big music festival. The goal was for the capital city of Morocco to enjoy national and international recognition year after year, whilst allowing the king to perpetuate his image as the main patron of the arts. Although many festivals are organized “under the high patronage of the king,” this festival is particularly significant due to the high profile of the artists invited to perform, such as Shakira, the Scorpions and Rihanna. However, this high profile festival comes at a high cost. As the artist of the cartoon suggests, the assets of the country are owned by ONA (Omnium Nord Africaine), here represented by a petrol pump. At one time, ONA was the most important private holding in the country, and the majority of its shares are owned by the royal family (Sater 2010, p.103; White 2008, p.101) In 2010, ONA was succeeded by Société National d’Investissement, again controlled by the monarchy.⁷³ The ONA Foundation⁷⁴ continues to be the cultural patron in charge of, for example, Villa Des Arts in Casablanca and Rabat. It is also responsible for organizing cultural activities

⁷¹ The author of this image signs as “Imad.” While the cartoon in Figure 6 has the artist’s signature in Arabic script, in this drawing the cartoonist signs using the Latin alphabet. However, the similarity between the drawings and names suggests that the same artist drew Figure 6 and 7. This image can be accessed at the news website goud.ma (<http://goo.gl/OLNn4O>) [Accessed July 9, 2014]) and in an anti-*Mawazine* Facebook page (<http://www.facebook/antimawazine>) [Accessed May 23, 2014]).

⁷² <http://www.telquel-online.com/En-couverture/Mawazine-un-miracle-royal/425> [Accessed July 23, 2014]). It must be noted that *Telquel*’s webpage wrongly dates this article as written on April 25, 2012.

⁷³ <http://www.moroccobusinessnews.com/Content/Article.asp?idr=18&id=1456> [Accessed October 24, 2013].

⁷⁴ <http://www.fondationona.ma/indexfr.htm> [Accessed July 9, 2014].

including those related to the music festival *Mawazine*.⁷⁵ On the pump in the cartoon, it is written in French “ONA *tout*” (ONA everything). The cartoonist plays with the French words and it can also be read as “On a tout” which means “we have everything.” To make things clearer, the artist also writes it on the pump, but this time in Darija, “*koulchi dyalna*” (everything is ours). The connection between this company, the Makhzen and *Mawazine* is unpacked in the previously mentioned article in *TelQuel* (June 5, 2010). It affirms that while this music festival had eleven sponsors in 2007, by 2010 it had double that number. The authors also suggest that many of the sponsors have close links with the monarchy and the Makhzen, such as the holding Siger, businessmen like Othman Benjelloun and Aziz Akhannouch,⁷⁶ or foreign companies close to the Moroccan monarchy like JLEC (Jorf Lasfar Energy Company), which is owned by the Abu Dhabi royal family.

In the cartoon, the petrol pump provides a briefcase to a representative of the Makhzen who, at the same time, is giving a dummy to a baby. The dummy has a tag with the word, “Mawazine,” and the child represents the Moroccan citizens, but particularly the youth who attend the festival. The cartoonist draws the child kneeling inside a box on which can be read the words, “Water, electricity, credit, education, living.” This is a criticism of the high costs of this festival, which takes place while the country fails to meet these basic needs. In addition, the cartoonist also toys with the word ONA by writing in French at the back of the cartoon in the style of a graffiti tag, “ON A RIEN,” that is, “we have nothing.” Although the

⁷⁵ Villa des Arts also hosts *Mawazine*’s press conferences (<http://www.lnt.ma/culture-maroc/mawazine-2012-des-artistes-de-legende-et-pas-de-financement-public-33119.html> [Accessed July 9, 2014]).

⁷⁶ Azziz Akhannouch was appointed Minister of Agriculture in 2013 and is president of the Concert pour la Tolérance association (<http://www.agriculture.gov.ma/pages/le-ministre> [Accessed January 22, 2013]).

festivals market a ‘cool’ image of Morocco, characterized by peace and tolerance (Belghazi 2006, p.102), they have also received a high level of social criticism in anti-*Mawazine* pages⁷⁷ where people share their discontent with the festival. Nevertheless, the fact that *Mawazine* can boast of over two million spectators,⁷⁸ together with an increase in sponsorship, affirms the political and economic power of the monarchy and the Makhzen.

The use of music, specially rap to control youth is also broadcasted in a rap video clip performed by the winners of *Génération Mawazine*, the *Mawazine*’s talent contest in which musicians participate in different categories (namely rap, rock and fusion). In 2011, the winners were the rap group Rwapa Crew and the rock band Babel.⁷⁹ The prize that year was to record a video clip and a song with the world-renowned producer RedOne from Tetouan, now based in the US (*L’Economiste*, August 29, 2010).⁸⁰ The production fees were paid for by *Génération Mawazine*. Babel and Rwapa Crew created the track and video clip “Feels So Right”⁸¹ (2012). This song exemplifies the idea put forward in this chapter that the city is a particularly important space to satisfy the Makhzen’s desire to control youth. The video clip of “Feels So Right” was entirely shot in Marrakech, between the streets of the old medina, the new Marrakech Royal Theatre and the SO Lounge, one of the numerous trendy nightclubs of the city. It starts with a Moroccan flag flying over the desert. Then, RedOne appears standing at the top of the Royal Theatre with the

⁷⁷ For example, <https://www.facebook.com/pages/Contre-Mawazine/124087071004063?fref=ts> [Accessed May 13, 2014].

⁷⁸ <http://www.yabiladi.com/articles/details/5604/l-boulevard-mawazine-david-contre-goliath.html> [Accessed May 13, 2014].

⁷⁹ <http://www.generationmawazine.ma/laureats/item/140-rwapa-crew.html> [Accessed May 13, 2014]; <http://www.generationmawazine.ma/laureats/item/141-babel.html> [Accessed May 13, 2014].

⁸⁰ <http://www.leconomiste.com/article/886542-red-one-produit-les-gagnants-de-generation-mawazine> [Accessed May 13, 2014].

⁸¹ <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UG4T9OuTHmI> [Accessed May 13, 2014].

national flag beside him and a vocalist from Babel singing “I’m alive, I’m alive.” After that, the rappers start their routine as they walk through the streets of Marrakech or stand beside the ancient walls of the medina with red and green scarves. Then Babel appears inside a building of the old town belting out the chorus in English: “Feels so right/ I’m alive, I’m alive/ I’m excited/ Never felt this way before/ I’m alive, I’m alive, so excited, high, high in the sky/ It’s amazing/ I’ll be waiting all my life/ And tonight, I’m alive, It feels so right.” While they are delivering the chorus, there are also shots of Rwapa Crew and members of Babel singing on the rooftops and beside the city walls. After the first chorus, Rwapa Crew’s second verse is performed on a stage inside a club and again in the souks of the medina. After the second chorus, the stage fills up with girls performing a choreographed dance dressed in shiny dresses and mini skirts a rare issue in Moroccan rap (See Chapter Five section two). The final chorus is performed in the mythical Jmaa El Fna Square. Both groups and RedOne stand together on a stage surrounded by the audience. It is significant that the lyrics of this song do not mention the city or urban locations like the other songs analyzed above did, signaling the song’s lack of social engagement with local urban spaces. In other words, this song lacks a closeness with the city and reveals itself to be a superficial song proving to be essentially state’s propaganda. This video clip is meant to advertise the state’s narrative of the nation and an idealized Moroccan identity instead of describing life in a popular neighborhood of a Moroccan city. The lyrics of the song follow the narrative of unity and maintaining peace and avoid any criticism: “let’s live in peace/let’s be strong/let’s be aware and believe without trouble/be brave

Moroccans!”⁸² The rappers stress the fact that Moroccans are brave and strong. Moreover, they insist on the idea of pride and the fight for the country’s education: “Be brave Moroccans/and say, say, say/I’ll fight for my country/be educated/and say proudly/I’m a Moroccan.”⁸³ The chorus of the song reiterates this positive and energetic spirit of unity.

The fact that the chorus is sung in English, and the video clip has subtitles suggests that it is not a song solely for national consumption but directed towards to use urban music production to promote Morocco’s trendy and ‘modern’ image internationally.⁸⁴ This is also linked to the appearance in the video clip of the producer RedOne, an unusual event in video clips. However, RedOne is known internationally because of his work with artists like Lady Gaga and Jennifer Lopez, among many others.⁸⁵ The fact that “Feels So Right” was released a few months after the MENA uprisings in 2011 and the launching of the pro-democracy M20F movement supports this thesis. Significantly, although rap groups could participate in the *Génération Mawazine* talent contest, that year the main *Mawazine* festival did not invite any rap groups. Although during the first years of *Mawazine*, from 2002 to 2005, Moroccan rap was absent from the festival, from 2006 to 2013 Moroccan rappers took part, with the exception of June 2011. H-Kayne performed in 2006, 2007, 2008, 2009 and 2013; Don Bigg in 2010, 2012 and 2013; Casa Crew and Fez City Clan in 2009; and Fnaïre and Muslim in 2012.

⁸² “*N3icho merta7ine/kounou 9ssa7ine/fi9ou ti9ou ah ma tkounouch 9ba7ine/koun meghribi rajel.*” The English translation of these song’s lyrics used for this analysis is available on the official video clip.

⁸³ “*Koun meghribi rajel/goul, goul, goul/3la bladi n9atel/koun, koun/9ari chwia/goul, goul, goul/meghribi smiya.*”

⁸⁴ The second section of Chapter One examines the narrative that presents Morocco as a traditional and modern country.

⁸⁵ <http://www.redoneprod.com/biography/> [Accessed May 23, 2014].

Capitalizing in urban spaces, most notably the Casablanca Twin Centre and the Hassan II Mosque in Casablanca, to echo the Makhzen's social and political narrative of the country is also behind the Don Bigg's video clip of the song "Mabghitch" (I Don't Want To) (2011). While the video clip is set in different parts of the city, the last section of the video clip is shot from the roof of the Twin Centre in Casablanca. These shots strategically point towards the Hassan II Mosque in the background. This is the moment when the rapper repeats the motto of the country, taking the last three words of the song from Morocco's national anthem: "*Allah, El Watan, El Malik*" (God, the Nation, The King). The shots of Don Bigg from the rooftop of one of the tallest buildings in the city, overlooking the second largest mosque in the world (Combs-Schilling 1999, p.193), reinforce the rapper's words. Bigg re-enacts the anthem employing the symbolism of the Hassan II Mosque to assert loyalty to the king and the Makhzen's agenda. Combs-Schilling (1999, p.205) argues that King Hassan II's aim in building this mosque was to create a new national icon. By establishing such a sacred site in Casablanca, the king hoped to connect with the population of a city where his legitimacy was at stake (Ibid, p.192). However, as Combs-Schilling claims, this space did not bring the king closer to his people, but "sets off the king as a monumentally different" (Ibid, p.205). In spite of this statement, the view of the tall minaret of the Hassan II Mosque from one rooftop in the Casablanca Twin Centre provides the rappers with a sense of empowerment. From the vantage point of the rooftops, the observer is able to see the whole, "totalizing the most immoderate of human texts" (Certeau 1984, p.92). As Certeau states, when observing New York from the World Trade Center, this elevation transforms the world "into a text that lies before one's eyes" (1984, p.92). The

rooftops provide a view that allows these rappers – and hence, the Makhzen – to convey a feeling of control over the totality the city. Like the track “Feels So Right,” Don Bigg also profits from using rooftops to strategically put himself in a position of power.

The significance of “Mabghitch” goes beyond its lyrics, as it is the only video clip that Don Bigg has released as a solo artist. Don Bigg was featured in clips such as “Men Zan9a LZan9a”⁸⁶ (From One Street to Another) (2004) by Casa Crew where he does not sing, but also in the track “Bladi”⁸⁷ (My Country) (2007) in which he sings with Ahmed Soultan and rapper Azed. He also appears in the clip of another collaboration with other French and Dutch rappers called “One Life”⁸⁸ (2010) or the video clip of the song commissioned by Maroc Telecom “Sma3ni”⁸⁹ (Listen to Me) (2007) together with H-Kayne and the singer Khansa Batma. The fact that “Mabghitch” is Don Bigg’s only solo video clip reveals on the one hand the importance of the use of imagery in music, and on the other hand, it evidences the rapper’s aim to harshly attack the M20F and any opposition to the pillars of the nation.

Tracks like “Mabghitch” (2011) and “Feels So Right” (2012) have been used as contentious tools aimed to co-opt urban youth and disempower unrests such as the February 20 pro-democracy demonstrations. Both songs wrap a message of opposition to the M20F inside footage of trendy urban centers like Marrakech or nightclubs or the Twin Centre juxtaposed with Casablanca at the intersection of the

⁸⁶ <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4kLKVnT6ACI> [Accessed May 7, 2014].

⁸⁷ <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7VNXwk0kzwM> [Accessed May 7, 2014].

⁸⁸ <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=O5thTipq58k> [Accessed May 7, 2014].

⁸⁹ <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4J9X-cMJSbk> [Accessed May 7, 2014].

old medina or a monumental mosque — footage that embodies the Makhzen's discourse of tradition and modernity coming together. The song uses both old and new quarters of major cities to attract the attention of urban youth and counteract the negative critiques of the monarchy. Ultimately, in asserting the political significance of urban spaces in Moroccan culture, these songs, as well as state controlled music festivals or royalties, highlight the value of co-opting rap as a way for the Makhzen to control urban youth. Nevertheless, the following section presents examples of resistance to the Makhzen's control staged through rap music and music festivals in the city of Casablanca.

5. Casablanca and Cultural Struggle

The urbanization of Casablanca and its status as an economic and cultural urban center for the country bestow this city with an important place in the imagery of Moroccan youth urban culture. In their songs, rappers from Casablanca have described their life in the economic capital of the country and shaped its name in songs such as “Cazafonia” (2011) from rapper Dizzy DROS or Don Bigg's “Casanegra” (2009). This section argues that while Don Bigg's work capitalizes on Casablanca to support the Makhzen's agenda of controlling urban youth spaces, other rappers and cultural actors have resisted the Makhzen's control, deploying their own strategies of contention in order to gain artistic independence.

Casablanca hosts the most important festival dedicated to youth and urban culture not directly controlled by the Makhzen, *L'Boulevard des Jeunes Musiciens*. Nevertheless, the Makhzen has attempted to gain control over this festival. In 2011 and 2012, coinciding with the MENA uprisings, *L'Boulevard* was cancelled because

of the withdrawal of its main sponsor, INWI a telecommunications subsidiary company previously owned by ONA.⁹⁰ However, INWI reappeared in the 2013 edition of *L'Boulevard* and the *Tremplin* as the main sponsor. A Moroccan Fanzine⁹¹ devoted to the heavy metal scene, *Lead Hangar*, accused *Mawazine* or, as they called it, the “festival makhzanien,” of “killing” *L'Boulevard*.⁹² By monopolizing the major sponsors, *Mawazine* has also been held responsible for the disappearance of other festivals like the *Festival de Casablanca*. As the founders of the *L'Boulevard* believe, the sponsors prefer to support a festival with two million spectators divided into eight locations rather than a relatively small festival with only around 100,000 people attending, like *L'Boulevard*.⁹³ However, since its conception, this music festival has encountered difficulties in obtaining public and private financial support (Callen 2006, p.141). This idea suggests that its cancellation in 2011 and 2012 is also related to the MENA uprisings and the power of this festival to express public opposition to the Makhzen. Due to funding difficulties, the organizers of the festival, EAC-L'Boulvart, had already accepted a check from the king for two million dirhams (£143,000) in 2009 to pay off part of its debts. This royal funding also helped to launch the Boultek Project, which was designed, among other things, to provide a recording studio for artists (*Aujourd'hui Le Maroc* June 19, 2010).⁹⁴ The

⁹⁰ <http://www.yabiladi.com/articles/details/5604/l-boulevard-mawazine-david-contre-goliath.html> [Accessed July 9, 2014].

⁹¹ A fanzine is a magazine produced by fans normally with no financial remuneration and circulated free of charge.

⁹² <http://lead-hangar.com/2012/06/04/des-armes-corruption-et-abus-de-pouvoir-de-mawazine-sont-soupconnees-avoir-tire-sur-lboulevard-et-dautres-evenements/> [Accessed July 10, 2012].

⁹³ However, according to the artistic director of *Mawazine* in 2011, the largest part of their budget comes from selling tickets, festival passes and TV licenses (<http://www.yabiladi.com/articles/details/5604/l-boulevard-mawazine-david-contre-goliath.html> [Accessed May 23, 2014]).

⁹⁴ <http://www.aujourdhui.ma/maroc-actualite/culture-medias/l-association-eac-l-boulvart-a-recu-un-don-royal-d-un-montant-de-deux-millions-de-dirhams-lundi-15-juin-a-rabat-ce-don-permettra-a-l-association-de-depasser-ses-difficultes-financieres-et-de-se-consacrer-pleinement-a-ses-projets-en-cours.-64622.html> [Accessed July 23, 2014].

Boultek Project received a second check from the king in 2011 (*TelQuel* July 18, 2011).⁹⁵ While *L'Boulevard* continues to be one of the few big music festivals managed independently of the Makhzen, the latter has still become its monetary patron. The strategy of withdrawing sponsorship provides the Makhzen with a tool to suppress independent cultural productions like magazines, newspapers or festivals without being held directly responsible or damaging the image of the monarchy. In other words, through this method, the Makhzen is not directly accused of controlling freedom of speech or of censorship. This was the case in the disappearance of the controversial magazine *Nichane*, which was published in Darija (Gershovich 2013, pp.103–104). In 2010, due to an advertiser boycott coordinated by the ONA group, the magazine was faced with financial insolvency and had to shut down.⁹⁶

Despite the overwhelming control of the Makhzen over independent initiatives like *L'Boulevard des Jeunes Musiciens*, the EAC-L'Boulevard association has profited from official sponsorship while resisting the attempts of the Makhzen to control the space where they develop their cultural activities called *L'Batwar* or *L'Battoir* in Darija.⁹⁷ Once a slaughterhouse, *L'Batwar*, situated on the edge of the popular neighborhood called Hay Mohammadi, continues to be a contested space that the youth are allowed to use informally, but not officially. The *Tremplin* of *L'Boulevard* takes place in *L'Batwar*, and this is where rappers such as H-Kayne, Don Bigg, Mobydick or Dizzy DROS have performed throughout the years. A collective known as *La Fabrique Culturelle des Abattoirs de Casablanca*, formed by

⁹⁵ http://m.telquel-online.com/archives/482/mage_culture3_482.shtml [Accessed July 23, 2014].

⁹⁶ http://www.lemag.ma/Boycott-publicitaire-Nichane-disparait-TelQuel-craint-le-meme-sort_a43939.html [Accessed July 9, 2014]; <http://www.yabiladi.com/articles/details/3366/nichane-victime-d-un-crime-publicitaire.html> [Accessed July 9, 2014].

⁹⁷ See for example this spelling in Boukhari's editorial for *TelQuel* (March 1, 2013. Available at: http://www.telquel-online.com/Editorial/Machri9-Al-Anwar/560?sms_ss=twitter&at_xt=5132265fe80b6807,0 [Accessed July 23, 2014]).

a group of artistic and cultural associations in the city, such as the EAC-L'Boulevard, has been fighting since 2008 to convert the old slaughterhouse into a cultural space.⁹⁸

L'Batwar has become a benchmark for hip hop culture in the city, used by the youth to paint graffiti or by rappers to record their video clips. Young people have taken over this space for the organization of cultural events and activities. It hosts many other smaller events related to hip hop culture, such as a gig to celebrate *slam*, an oral poetry genre within hip hop culture, that took place during the summer of 2012 and 2013 with the participation of one of the pioneers of Moroccan rap, Koman and his crew Thug Gang.⁹⁹ In respect to rapper's production, this space has hosted many rap video clips such as "A la Marocaine"¹⁰⁰ (2011) by Hatim from H-Kayne, but also less known songs such as "L'feeling Dayz"¹⁰¹ (2010) by Casa System. During my fieldwork, I had the chance to visit L'Batwar for several cultural events. In January 2012 I attended there the shooting of the video clip of the members of Casa Crew: Masta Flow and MC Caprice, in their song "7di Mennou"¹⁰² (Be Careful with Him) (2012), a song about 'fake' friends and people that talk about others behind their backs.

As a site associated with cultural resistance, in 2010 Muslim shot in L'Batwar the video clip of the song "Fine 7a9na"¹⁰³ (Where Are Our Rights?) with a member of Casa Crew, Chaht Man. In this song, Muslim creates a narrative focused on empowering the people and helping them reclaim their agency to act. Here, Muslim

⁹⁸ <http://www.abattoirs-casablanca.org/node/13> [Accessed July 9, 2014].

⁹⁹ A video made in its first edition in 2012 that includes an extract of the performance of the rappers Koman and Philo (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7OD5I9KImxU> [Accessed August 23, 2013]).

¹⁰⁰ <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TkZreRE5Ees> [Accessed May 23, 2013].

¹⁰¹ http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D9gCfy_cPaY [Accessed May 23, 2013].

¹⁰² http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kLVmsm_Q9x4 [Accessed May 23, 2013].

¹⁰³ <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PJIOHtlcvp8> [Accessed August 23, 2013].

critiques the fact that political and economic changes in Morocco remain superficial with the line, “They gave me wings and told me don’t dream you will fly,”¹⁰⁴ meaning that the country professes that it bestows freedom of speech, but, he asks, what is the point of freedom without real change? Furthermore, Muslim states: “I don’t want my voice to be the echo at the bottom of a well,”¹⁰⁵ asserting that he wants to have a voice, but more importantly, he wants to be listened to. Muslim not only wants the right to speak, he wants change to result from this act. As he insists, “my country is mine even if rights are lost,”¹⁰⁶ he refuses to be co-opted by the system and to give up. The empowerment that Muslim transmits when he claims ownership of his country is shared with the audience and future rappers. In this video clip, the lyrics combine with the footage of L’Batwar, using the significance it has acquired during the years of *L’Boulevard* festival and other cultural uses of this space to emphasize Muslim’s message of resistance and opposition of the hegemonic power of the state.

In addition to the Muslim’s use of this space, L’Batwar also became a site of struggle a year later on March 2, 2013, during a cultural event called *Machi9 Al Anwar* (Sources of Lights), which was organized to demonstrate against the use of L’Batwar as a parking lot for civil servants. The name of the event re-appropriates the second line of the Moroccan National Anthem to reclaim culture as a fundamental element in the construction of the nation and to reconcile with urban spaces (*TelQuel* March 1, 2013).¹⁰⁷ Hence, the national anthem was used to counter

¹⁰⁴ “3tetoni jn7in w 9oltoli mat7lemchi terr.”

¹⁰⁵ “mabghitch sawti yb9a ghe sda fl9a3 del ber.”

¹⁰⁶ “bladi teb9a bladi wakha 7a9 fiha daya3.”

accusations that the event was unpatriotic,¹⁰⁸ and to re-appropriate urban and national spaces for youth's independent artistic production.

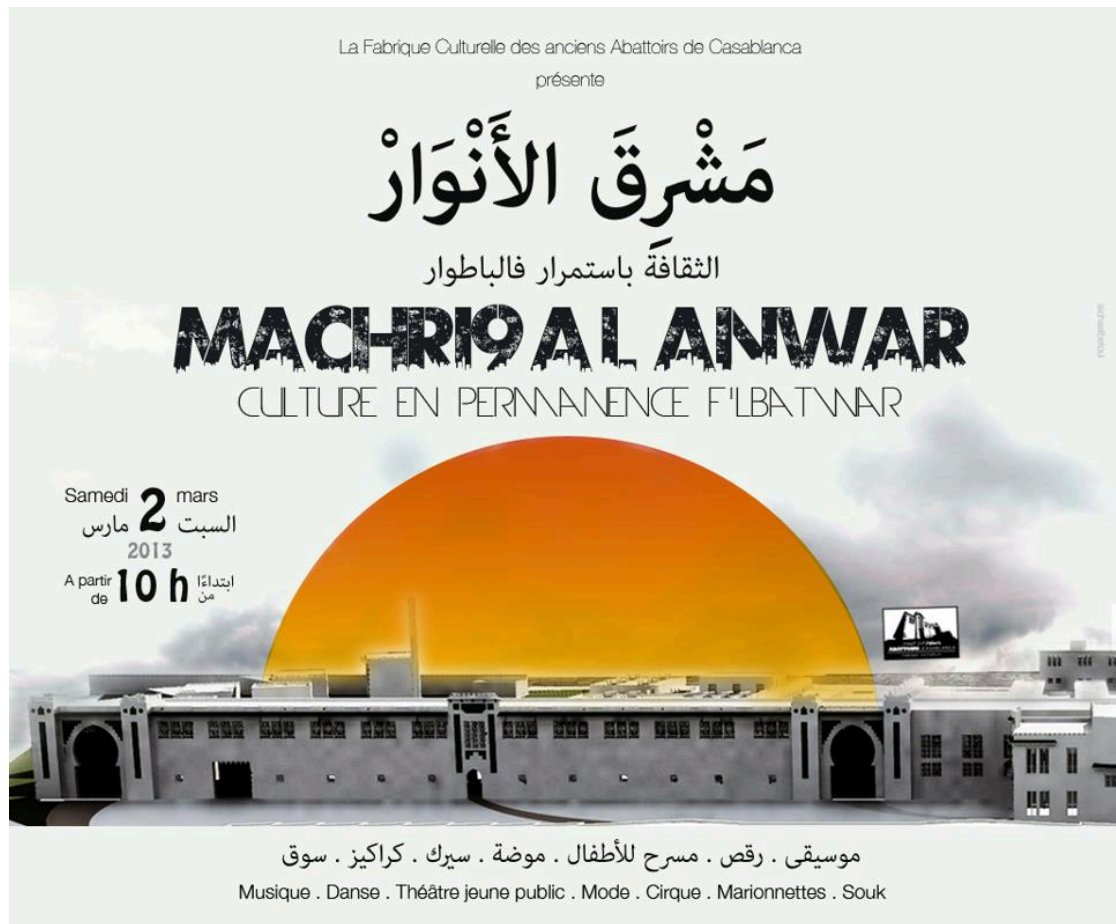


Figure 8. Poster of the event *Machri9 al Anwar* (2013) in Casablanca

The event was hastily set up and included diverse cultural events such as children's theatre, a souk, a dance and concerts. The young filmmakers and activists from Guerrilla Cinema spent the day in L'Batwar to film all the events as they told me when I met them that day. This was a collective action where cultural associations, artists, and the audience itself combined to resist the conversion of a space occupied by the arts into a car park. The fact that it succeeded shows the power of popular

¹⁰⁷ http://www.telquel-online.com/Editorial/Machri9-Al-Anwar/560?sms_ss=twitter&at_xt=5132265fe80b6807,0 [Accessed July 23, 2014].

¹⁰⁸ Section one of Chapter Three argues that nations discursively construct an enemy and claim patriotism in order to gain control over the nation.

will. Moreover, it revealed the power of the people and their cultural action, precisely because the location was never used as a parking lot and has since hosted artistic events, such as the *Tremplin* in September 2013. This event corroborated the fact that cultural actors and youth in Casablanca are ready to fight for the urban spaces they have occupied and to host cultural events of their own, even if they are sponsored directly by the Makhzen.¹⁰⁹

Furthermore, the EAC-L'Boulevard association has also found strategies of resisting the Makhzen's control over *L'Boulevard*. The festival's 2013 official poster is an example of the *L'Boulevard* artistic resistance to the Makhzen by showing a person pushing against two walls, which hold the city of Casablanca [Figure 9]. The person, probably a man, pushing against two walls symbolizes cultural resistance as Hicham Bahou, one of the founder of the festival told me in a visit to Boultek in Technopark (Casablanca) on September 3, 2013, days before the festival. The position of this person where the city looms above the individual stands in contrast with Don Bigg's position over the city in "Mabghitch." While Don Bigg's position allows the rapper to scrutinize the city from above, symbolizing power, the fact that the average person in the poster supports the city from below, symbolizes popular resistance.

The poster for *L'Boulevard* also capitalizes on Casablanca's architectural diversity, the combination of the old medina, the colonial construction and the mosques to show the complexity of the city. Significantly, the image does not divide the old and the new parts of the city thus melting all the different urban spaces into

¹⁰⁹ Recently people from Casablanca have created a Facebook page called Critical Mass Casablanca to gather people interested in regaining the ownership of Casablanca's public space (<https://www.facebook.com/criticalmasscasablanca> [Accessed May 8, 2014]).

one. The complexity of the city is transmitted through the Casablanca Twin Center at the top of the image widely used as a symbol of the city's iconography within rap songs and video clips.



Figure 9. Poster of Festival *L'Boulevard* 2013

As the previously stated, the Twin Center is part of Don Bigg's image for DBF studios and the song "Mabghitch." Muslim however exhibits the Casablanca Twin Center in the video clip of the song "Fine 7a9na" (2010) as a signifier of social difference, as this center is located in a rich neighborhood of the city. He sings, "Because there are kids of the slums and kids of the Twins."¹¹⁰ However, these building are also a public meeting space for youth as Dizzy DROS states. In "Cazafonia"¹¹¹ (2011), he sings, "Been hiding for a while and now he comes out to put his face between the Twins."¹¹² Then in "Men Hna"¹¹³ (2012) (From Here), Dizzy DROS also raps: "Whenever they pass beside the Twins they'll recognize me."¹¹⁴ For this young rapper, the Twins, as they are most commonly called, represent the public space where he goes to be seen and recognized. These towers in the center of the city surrounded by foreign shops such as Zara or Rip Curl have become a site of capitalism and liberalism. As the Casablanca Twin Center is a symbol of consumerism, the set of towers are also a signpost for trendy and cool youth who want to challenge tradition.

In addition to the symbolism of the city, the poster for *L'Boulevard* 2013 carries messages against the Makhzen embedded in the buildings of the old medina of Casablanca. The clues are hidden as names of shops, driving schools and grocery stores, and contain messages of resistance to national and international events, for

¹¹⁰ "7it kayn wld l karian w kayn weld Twin."

¹¹¹ <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YCYj4vbCr40> [Accessed May 23, 2013].

¹¹² "Ghber bzzaf daba khrej y7at kmmarto bin Twin. "

¹¹³ <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-D6RIIrJ0R0> [Accessed May 23, 2013].

¹¹⁴ "Finma ghaydouzou men goddam Twin ghay3arfouni."

example, “Butcher Palestine”¹¹⁵ in clear opposition to the occupation of Palestine [Figure 10].

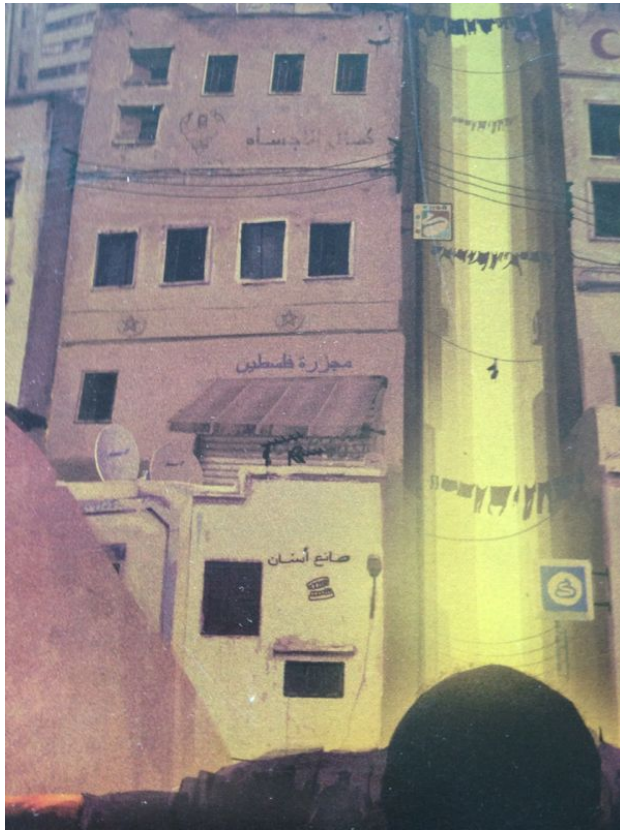


Figure 10. Section of *L'Boulevard* 2013 Poster “Butcher Palestine”

Moreover, the poster includes a nursery called “Daniel Nursery School”¹¹⁶ [Figure 11]. This refers to the events that took place in the summer 2013 when a Spanish-Iraqi pedophile named Daniel Galván in Kenitra was condemned to 30 years’ prison for raping 11 children, but received a royal pardon and was released.

¹¹⁵ In Arabic reads as *Majzarat Filistīn*.

¹¹⁶ In Arabic reads as *Ruḍ Daniel Al Atfāl*.

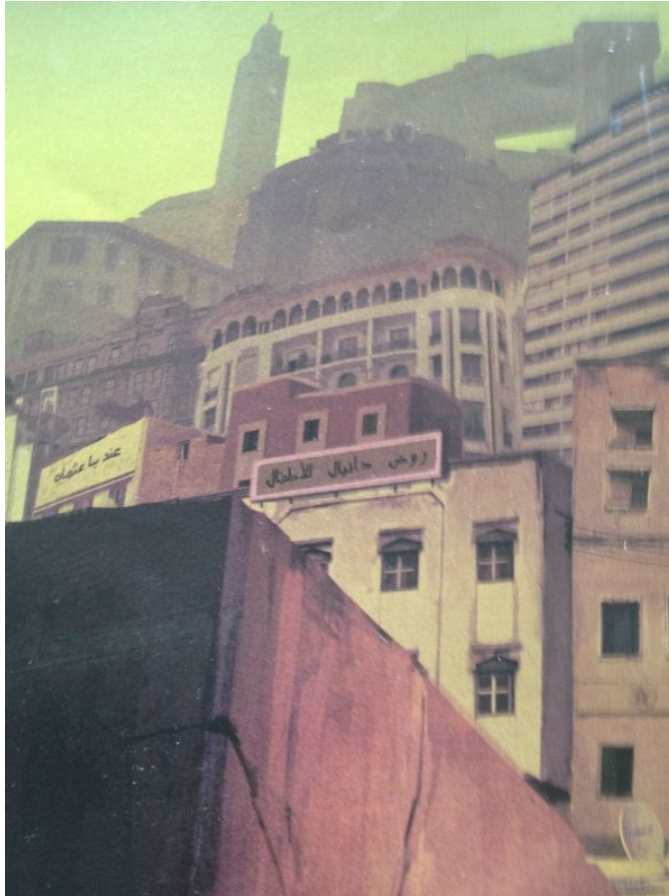


Figure 11. Section of *L'Boulevard* 2013 Poster “Daniel Nursery School”

Large sections of the urban population all around Morocco reacted with fury and the subsequent demonstrations were brutally repressed by the police in Rabat and Tangiers (*Le Monde* August 3, 2013).¹¹⁷ In the end, the king revoked the pardon. However, this event is regarded as a triumph for the people and a proof of their ascendancy over the king’s power in one of the most serious crises since the king’s accession to the throne (*L’Express* September 9, 2013).¹¹⁸

¹¹⁷ [http://www.lemonde.fr/afrique/article/2013/08/03/une-manifestation-contre-la-grace-d-un-pedophile-dispersee-au-maroc_3457051_3212.html#xtor=EPR-32280229-\[NL_Titresdujour\]-20130803-\[titres\]](http://www.lemonde.fr/afrique/article/2013/08/03/une-manifestation-contre-la-grace-d-un-pedophile-dispersee-au-maroc_3457051_3212.html#xtor=EPR-32280229-[NL_Titresdujour]-20130803-[titres]) [Accessed May 8, 2014].

¹¹⁸ http://www.lexpress.fr/actualite/monde/afrique/maroc-la-tentation-de-la-revolution-de-velours_1277899.html [Accessed May 8, 2014].

Significantly, a few weeks after this event, rappers that started their careers in the *L'Boulevard* festival like Don Bigg and H-Kayne received a Royal Medal,¹¹⁹ emphasizing the Makhzen's strategic use of rappers. The Royal Medal was given to Don Bigg after his public support of the Makhzen against the M20F with the song and video clip "Mabghitch"¹²⁰ (2011). However, the strategies of resistance here discussed and deployed by rappers and cultural actors are also supported by the failure of songs like "Mabghitch" or "Feels so right" to reach the youth in a significant manner. As for the latter, the video clip was published on January 31, 2012, but up until September 2013 only had 120,727 views.¹²¹ However, other rap songs published during the same period gained many more views. For example Dizzy DROS' video clip of "Cazafonia"¹²² released on YouTube just two months earlier in November 2011 has had nearly 1 million views by September 2013. Even video clips published later, in March 2012, like Masta Flow and MC Caprice's "7di Mennou", had 299,033 views by September 2013, more that double those of "Feels so right." Similarly, Don Bigg's song and clip "Mabghitch" (2011), with less than 300,000 views on YouTube, remains far below, for example, Muslim's single "Law Kan Lwa9i3 Law7a" (2011), which was released six months before in June 2011, and had nearly 3 million views by September 2013.¹²³ Therefore, these two songs "Mabghitch" or "Feels so right" failed to engage with youth. Although they use local and familiar urban spaces in their images, the lyrics focus on reproducing official political discourses while overlooking artistic value and creativity, as well as the use

¹¹⁹ <http://hespress.com/orbites/87144.html> [Accessed May 8, 2014].

¹²⁰ <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D3GMgKehhk0> [Accessed May 7, 2014].

¹²¹ <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UG4T9OuTHmI> [Accessed November 2, 2013].

¹²² Chapter Five discusses further Dizzy DROS' cultural production including the song "Cazafonia" (2011).

¹²³ <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1B6WNbjFka0&list=TLY8OuCoEL5js> [Accessed November 2, 2013].

of personal histories as a way of engaging with the everyday anxieties of young people. The audience perceived these video clips and these rappers as bogus because the lyrics do not embrace everyday places, such as Don Bigg does in his earlier works, or employ everyday language. The above section provides evidence on Casablanca is a space of cultural struggle for youth to resist the state's power. Despite the attempt to control music festivals or rappers' production, cultural actors in the Moroccan music scene, including rappers, find strategies to manifest their opposition to the Makhzen's control.

Conclusion

This chapter provides evidence on urban youth culture's central position in staging the struggle between the dominant power of the state, co-opted rappers and the strategies of resistance of other rappers and cultural actors. The specificities of language use in Morocco emerge as a tool of engagement and resistance used by rappers to relate to urban youth daily lives. However, language also shows how resistance can be shaped in different ways. Moroccan literature written in French claims its engagement from the point of view of the producer or "encoder." This chapter claims however that resistance is located in the process of "decoding," that is, in the message arriving to its target audience. Rappers therefore use street Darija or a refined version of it as different strategies to relate to the audience. The connection these rappers have gained, however, can also be co-opted to promote the state's own agenda. The Makhzen co-option of 'rebellious' artists aims at gaining control over excluded urban youth, particularly the unprivileged. In the same vein, the Makhzen seeks to control urban spaces through the patronage of music festivals, but also through economic control in form of copyrights from the artists'

productions. Creative cultural resistance has emerged to fight back the overwhelming control of the state as the 2013 *L'Boulevard* poster evidences. In this sense, spaces like the L'Batwar intimately connected to rap music production also stage the struggle to occupy and co-opt urban spaces for cultural creation and its public display. Despite the fact that certain language and spaces are constructed as rebellious, their use by rappers in their work does not necessarily indicate acts of cultural resistance. Though the use of vulgar language can embody an aim to challenge the authority of the state, this chapter shows that it can also serve its aim to side with the youth. Therefore, the role of the state and economics are crucial in understanding cultures of opposition. The following chapter will explore further these two aspects to present how the state's support of certain rappers has encouraged the new subgenre of patriotic rap in Morocco. These patriotic narratives depict a biased image of the country focused on happy people and beautiful landscape while overlooking the profound social malaises. The chapter will examine the link between this genre and the economic gain of those rappers who dedicate an extensive part of their music production to patriotic themes as well as the reactions of other rappers against this subgenre.

Chapter Three: Branding Patriotic Rap

All across the Middle East and North Africa, patriotic songs are produced in all manner of music genres. Despite their ubiquity, the number of studies on the role of patriotic or nationalistic songs in the Arabic-speaking world remains limited to works dealing with individual singers (Massad 2005, p.176). This aim of this chapter is to examine the continuous production of patriotic rap songs as a particular phenomenon from the Moroccan rap scene.¹ Contrary to other national rap scenes like the Palestinian one known for its criticism of politics, patriotic Moroccan rap songs consolidate the Makhzen's agenda both at times of social, political, and economic time of crisis or in times of relative calm. The presence of these supportive songs in the Moroccan rap scene enhances the power of the Makhzen to contain dissent and perpetuate its status quo supporting other strategies performed by the state such as introducing cosmetic reforms. In the case of Moroccan rap, the 2003 terrorist attacks in Casablanca can be seen as a key historical moment of crisis that prompted a wave of patriotic rap songs. The patriotic songs released in these moments of turmoil draw on national unity to fight political opponents specially targeting young audiences for whom the language of reform may not be effective. Their narrative constructs an enemy whose will is to divide and destroy the country, while patriots' aim to develop the country and bring a brighter future. Thus, rappers build a narrative that separates the members of the nation between those who are patriotic and caring citizens, and those perceived as enemies of the nation.

¹ Patriotic rap songs have emerged also in the Palestinian scene as will be addressed later in this chapter.

The economic gain that rappers can capitalize on from their patriotic rap songs has meant that some artists have perpetuated this type of song and branded patriotism beyond what might have otherwise been the case. Rappers like H-Kayne and Fnaïre that dwell on patriotic themes thus become a national and international propaganda tool for the Makhzen, while at the same time capitalizing on their notoriety at a national and international level to gain fame and income. This is not the case for all artists, however; rappers like Muslim and Mobydick as well as other cultural actors take a negative view of these patriotic songs and video clips. These rappers have devoted songs to denounce the emptiness of rap patriotic songs lacking of any critical perspective towards society and politics and becoming an easy product to create and consume.

The first section of this chapter explores the genesis of patriotic rap songs, and looks at Fnaïre's song "Matkich Bladi"² (Don't Touch My Country) (2004) as the benchmark of patriotic rap. Written as a reaction to the Casablanca terrorist attacks in 2003, "Matkich Bladi" reproduces ideas of national unity and peaceful coexistence and posits the attackers as enemies of the nation. The second section examines how this patriotic rap music reproduced the Makhzen's discourse of change towards development and democratization marketed as the Moroccan 'exception.' The third section, however, presents a dissenting voice by looking at rappers who express disbelief over those they label 'optimist' rappers such as Fnaïre or H-Kayne. This label underscores the fact that rappers that endorse the narrative of exceptionalism have branded a trademark that works to gain economic capital within the Moroccan cultural field. The analysis looks in particular here at the songs of

² http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F0tKoJ_3GtE [Accessed February 20, 2014].

Muslim and Mobydick, which are critical of patriotic rap, and show how some cultural actors have responded to patriotic rap songs. The fourth and last section takes a closer look at patriotic songs produced as a response to the pro-democracy 20 February Movement (M20F) in 2011. This final section argues that rappers like H-Kayne serve the Makhzen's agenda in thwarting dissident voices like the M20F and its expression of alternative options for the country, and rather frames such dissent within the 'enemy' category.

1. Genesis of Patriotic Rap

Since the country's independence in 1956, Moroccan artists have been encouraged to dedicate their songs to patriotic themes as the second section of Chapter One showed (Baldassarre 2003, p.82; Callen 2006, p.33). Some rappers in Morocco have followed this trend dedicating such a significant number of songs to the oeuvre that is now a subgenre called rap *patriotique* or patriotic rap as *TelQuel* (February 12, 2011, p.25) identified in an issue dedicated to patriotism and youth. Despite its prominence as a topic of rap music today, patriotic themes did not appear in the initial stages of 1990s Moroccan rap music. Patriotic themes with lyrics and video clips that defend and claim love and pride for the nation appeared only after 2003, but have been steadily produced since then. This section shows how the May 16 2003 Casablanca terrorist attacks and the song produced in their wake, "Matkich Bladi"³ (Don't Touch My Country) (2004), is a watershed in development of national rap music. Also taken into account are the urban youth demonstrations of the same year, which saw protests against the imprisonment of fourteen musicians in Casablanca under accusations of Satanism. This section argues that the emergence of

³ http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F0tKoJ_3GtE [Accessed February 20, 2014].

patriotism was a response to a moment of rupture and crisis in the country when the Makhzen's power was challenged. Sponsoring patriotic rap was a strategy to co-opt urban youth culture, but also to contain the rise of political Islam mainly the PJD (Party of Justice and Development), a party that had not supported the monarchy in the past and was gaining popular support at the time, and the Justice and Charity group (*al 'Adl wa al Ihasān*).⁴

On May 16, 2003 in Casablanca twelve men who had strapped themselves with bombs attacked a five star downtown hotel, a Spanish restaurant and a Jewish community center in Casablanca, the economic capital of the country. Shortly after the blasts, the Moroccan Interior Minister blamed the attacks on “international terrorism,”⁵ connecting the perpetrators with violent Islamist movements (Aboullouz 2011, p.161). In addition to claims that the blasts were motivated by jihad, an alternative interpretation signaled poverty as a common denominator amongst the bombers, who were all residents of Sidi Moumen, the largest slum in Casablanca (Beau & Graciet 2006; Bahmad 2013). Sater (2010, p.79) has been one proponent of the poverty theory, arguing that while the Ministry of Interior blamed a sophisticated network of Islamist militants, the bombings were really more connected to wealth inequities. As Sater explains, the targets for the bombing were not nationally strategic or political locations like tourist areas or government offices, rather they were “the closest site[s] associated with conspicuous consumption, immorality and foreigners in Casablanca itself” (Ibid). The alternative readings of the attacks triggered a political debate on the country's social disparity and the role of Islamist

⁴ As Francesco Cavatorta (2009, p.144) argues, the PJD has been largely co-opted since it recognized the primacy of the king.

⁵ <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/3035803.stm> [Accessed February 20, 2014].

parties which also questioned the authority of the king. Beyond the internal debates, the attacks and the government interpretation saw years of arbitrary arrests of those perceived as Islamists or linked to Islamist groups (Storm 2007, pp.107–108).

The state's focus on Islamist radicalization allowed officials to capitalize on the attacks as a way to control not only to the PJD, but the Justice and Charity group and other Salafī groups. In the 2002 national elections, the PJD had surprised the country by coming third after the Socialist Union and the nationalist Istiqlal party (Howe 2005, p.134). The electoral success of the party was particularly surprising because the PJD was allowed to participate only after agreeing to present candidates in a limited number of districts to ensure it would not win the elections (Storm 2007, p.88). However, the 2007 legislative elections did not see the same success for PJD and the party did not earn enough votes to enter the government. The elections overall had a very low turnout, however, which was read as a lack of confidence in the political system, an idea shared by the Justice and Charity group (Cavatorta 2009, p.146; Joffé 2009, p.161; Kausch 2009, p.169).

Highlighting the connection between unrest, youth culture and the ramifications of the 2003 attacks was the arrest and criminal prosecution of fourteen metal heads⁶ for acts of Satanism in Casablanca that same year. In February 2003, fourteen young heavy metal musicians and fans sporting black t-shirts and owning a snake, a guitar and/or skulls were arrested in Casablanca and accused of Satanism (Callen 2006, p.1). One researcher who has considered the incident is Sonja Hegasy (2007, p.29), she argues that this case had an effect on how the youth of Morocco

⁶ Metal heads refer to those involved with heavy metal music may these be musicians or fans of this music genre and specific aesthetics.

viewed the king's legitimacy. Newspapers and magazines like *TelQuel*, *L'Economiste*, or even the less critical outlets generally aligned with the state such as *Aujourd'hui le Maroc*, perceived the state's condemnation of the teens and the resulting prison sentences as a threat to freedom of expression.⁷ Well-known journalist and former editor of *TelQuel*, Karim Boukhari wrote, some ten months after the events, that the news of the arrests had the same effect as a bomb on the country (*La Vie Économique* December 5, 2003),⁸ and quickly took on a national dimension. In response, a collective of critical organizations⁹ began demanding the release of the teens (Callen 2006, p.3). The newspaper *L'Economiste* (December 31, 2003) in its New Year's Eve edition called the arrests and ensuing social mobilization against them something that was "never seen in the history of Morocco" and noted that, "the case had mobilized a large section of the civil society. Without this reaction, the outcome of the trial would have been different."¹⁰ Though the case of the teens has largely been left out of the debate on the terrorist attacks, which focuses on the country's foreign policy, when considering the internal implications of the attacks and their aftermath, the arrest of the metal music fans can also be read as oppression of the public display of youth's discontent. The press also related the arrests to PJD's entrance to the Moroccan Parliament after the 2002 elections.¹¹ As the defense lawyer for the music fans argued, the trial was a "witch-hunt aimed at

⁷ <http://www.bladi.net/la-condamnation-de-14-jeunes-accuses-de-satanisme-suscite-une.html> [Accessed February 28, 2014].

⁸ <http://www.lavieeco.com/news/societe/10-mois-apres-leur-calvaire-les-rockers-sataniques-racontent-6296.html> [Accessed February 28, 2014].

⁹ The coalition included three human rights organizations (the Association Marocaine des Droits de l'Homme (AMDH), the Organisation Marocaine des Droits Humains (OMDH) and the Forum pour la Vérité et la Justice (FVJ)), together with feminist organizations and the union of left movements (the Gauche Socialiste Unifiée, or GSU), and the Party of the Independent Left.

¹⁰ <http://www.leconomiste.com/article/retro-2003brsalafia-et-satanisme-la-justice-mise-rude-epreuve> [Accessed February 28, 2014].

¹¹ <http://www.bladi.net/maroc-appel-a-la-revision-du-proces-de-musiciens-soupconnes-de.html> [Accessed February 28, 2014].

pleasing Islamists” (*The Guardian* March 11, 2003).¹² However, as Callen (2006, p.3) shows, numerous Islamists were also arrested in the months prior to this case, which suggests that both events were efforts by the Makhzen to remove dissent from both sides: Islamists and young metal heads representing urban youth. So, in the end, the state pleased the Islamists’ with its condemnation of Western ‘satanic’ cultural invasion (Daadaoui 2011, p.137), but its arrest of people accused of being militant Islamists belied the real fight of the Makhzen against the rise of political Islam and jihadi movements nationally and internationally.

After these events, the rap group Fnaïre, unknown until then, released the song “Matkich Bladi” (2004), in which it reproduced the official narrative of the May 2003 events calling it a patriotic song: “Fnaïre offers the country a patriotic and engaged title: ‘Matkich Bladi’ ‘Ne touche pas a mon pays.’”¹³ Though Fnaïre refers to this song as engaged, “Matkich Bladi” paints Morocco as an idealized nation that is only disrupted by the terrorist attacks. In taking on the official line, Fnaïre does not examine the causes that led to the attack or critically engage with the country’s social and economic issues. The lyrics address the terrorists who attacked the country and anyone else who wants to harm Morocco. The chorus goes: “Don’t touch my country/it’s my land and my grandparents’ land/it’s my land and my grandson’s land/and the one who messes with my country/I will take him by force and I shout/Don’t you touch my country.”¹⁴ In ordering terrorists to refrain from attacks, Fnaïre also claim ownership of the homeland as part of their family inheritance. In this sense, Fnaïre reproduces the nationalist linear construction of the country’s

¹² <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2003/mar/11/arts.artsnews> [Accessed February 28, 2014].

¹³ www.fnaïremusic.com [Accessed February 28, 2014].

¹⁴ “*wa mat9iche bladi/ardi w arde jdadi/ardi w arde 7fabi/wli nheb f bladi/nrfdou bchda w nadi/mat9issouche bladi.*”

history in order to protect Morocco referring to the strong links with ancestors claim strong links that unite Morocco as a country through history (See Chapter One sections one and two).

Fnaïre reproduces an ideal nation in the lyrics of the song by presenting a country where people have high standards of morality, who are kind and hospitable: “We don’t rob, we don’t steal, we don’t hurt or harm anyone¹⁵ [...] we don’t hurt God’s creatures;”¹⁶ they go on to claim “this is my country and if I see kindness, I open the doors.”¹⁷ One member of the group, Mouhssine, reiterated the sentiment in an interview: “Peace and living in harmony in your country are the main messages coming through our songs” (Mouhssine 2007). Yet in this song, Fnaïre does not claim peace but divides the country two defining Morocco as a nation of ‘good’ people destroyed by the terrorists, who are then blamed for ending a period of trust and peaceful cohabitation between Moroccans. As the rappers sing, “we started to suspect friends, Casa[blanca] has exploded, we shut the doors, the trust was lost and probably it won’t ever come back.”¹⁸ Towards the end of the song, Fnaïre questions the terrorists’ reasons for the attack, calling the motivation a “hate” of Morocco: “Why end your life when your country still loves you? When your country still loves you? When your country still loves you?”¹⁹ Fnaïre establishes the narrative of events as a binary love versus hate. As they claim in the song “who hates us in our country is ignored,”²⁰ so that as long as you are kind, peaceful and pious you belong to the country, and if you are not, you will be disdained by ‘us,’ that is, the ‘good’

¹⁵ “*manhbou mansr9ou man’adiw manjr7ou.*”

¹⁶ “*rou7 rabi mandlmou.*”

¹⁷ “*yalehbabe hadi beladi ou l khireha nehel el babe hiseri we kiseri.*”

¹⁸ “*nchkou fl7babe, tfgerte casa ssdina lbwabe, mab9atte ti9a mohal wach tareje3 el omomr.*”

¹⁹ “*3elach tefeni hyatek ou bladek mazal bghatek ou bladek mazal bghatek ou bladek mazal bghatek.*”

²⁰ “*likrhna fbladna mnboude.*”

Moroccans. In all, “Matkich Bladi” makes no further attempt to go beyond the love/hate discourse perpetuating uncritically the official narrative that discursively constructs Islamists as the enemy of the country without exploring the alternative arguments that pointed to extreme poverty and marginality as the motivation behind the blasts. Rather it considers the attackers as ‘black sheep’ who need to be stopped in order to protect the peace and unity of the country: “Stay where you’re at, don’t destroy/Don’t kill innocent people/It’s a shame what you planned/It’s a sin what you did.”²¹ By creating a utopian nation of goodness, Fnaïre portrays the terrorists as evil calling them “black-hearted”²² and therefore outsiders of the Moroccan nation.

Fnaïre employs the myth of religious coexistence in Morocco to accentuate the utopian narrative of the ‘goodness’ and the peacefulness of Moroccans, which was shaken in its core by the Casablanca attacks (Howe 2005, p.340). Fnaïre suggests that in Morocco diversity is not only accepted, but embraced: “Christians, Muslims and Jews, we have grown up, all in my country like brothers.”²³ As Fnaïre, the Moroccan cultural field, in particular music festivals, capitalizes on constructing Morocco as a place of religious –or even ethnic or racial– peaceful coexistence. The *Mawazine* festival, for example, works to offer a taste of diverse music from around the world, and the *Festival d’Essaouira Gnaoua Musiques du Monde* focuses on the African and Black routes, while *Fez Festival of World Sacred Music* portrays a rather sacred depiction of Morocco (El Maarouf 2013, p.4). Those chosen to organize the festivals also highlight diversity as for example André Azoulay, a royal adviser and supervisor of the *Festival d’Essaouira*, who is also highest visible head of the

²¹ “7dk tmak matkhrbou/ nass abriae mat9tlou/ Rah 3ibe hatchi linwitou / rah 7rame hadchi.”

²² “k7le l9lbe.”

²³ “3chna kife lkhoute nssara msslmime yhoude, likrhna fbladna mndoube.”

Moroccan Jewish community. Indeed, Azoulay claims that music festivals in Morocco are meant to support religious diversity (Boum 2012a, p.25). Despite the official narrative of religious and ethnic diversity that is reenacted in “Matkich Bladi,” the state is not officially diverse. Article 3 of the Constitution clearly states that Morocco is a Muslim country: “Islam is the religion of the state that guarantees everyone freedom of religion.”²⁴ Even if religious diversity was granted officially in the new 2011 constitution, the population of Morocco is 99% Muslim, 1% Christian, and there are only a small fraction with a total of 6,000 Jews.²⁵ Religious diversity is barely experienced in Morocco is in everyday life, with less than 2% of the country as officially non-Muslim. This is revealed in data collected by Pew Center on interfaith relations whereby 98% of Moroccans Muslims interviewed asserted that most of their close friends are Muslims too, or only 9% admitted to know something about Christians.²⁶ The idea of religious tolerance that Fnaïre reproduces, thus supports less the reality of everyday life, and rather reiterates the Makhzen agenda that capitalizes on religious diversity to positively market a liberal image of Morocco.

Reinforcing the picture of an utopian Moroccan nation attacked by terrorist who wish to destroy its peaceful life, Fnaïre employs the symbolism of the Hand of Fatima,²⁷ or the *khamisa* (meaning ‘five’ in Arabic, the term represents the five fingers of a hand as it is commonly referred to in Morocco (Hildburgh 1955, p.70) as the logo of the hit song, and as a sign in a number of places in the video clip of

²⁴ <http://www.maroc.ma/en/content/constitution> [Accessed May 5, 2014]; <http://www.maroc.ma/NR/rdonlyres/2298ADD6703C471EB924A5E4F396FEA2/0/Texteint%C3%A9gralduprojetdenouvelleConstitution.pdf> [Accessed May 5, 2014].

²⁵ <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/mo.html> [Accessed February 28, 2014].

²⁶ <http://www.pewforum.org/2013/04/30/the-worlds-muslims-religion-politics-society-interfaith-relations/> [Accessed February 28, 2014].

²⁷ The name of Fatima was given after the daughter of the Prophet Muhammad.

“Matkich Bladi.” In the case of Fnaïre’s song, the khamisa is used symbolically to stop attackers from harming Morocco. In their video clip the crew and other actors appear showing the palms of their hands, or their khamisa, as a sign of protection. The symbol of the hand is used as an amulet all over the Mediterranean and comes from Punic or Jewish iconography to protect the dead; it is thus not uniquely conned to Islamic culture (Achrati 2003, p.477). Throughout North Africa and the Middle East, it is used as a talisman for protection and against the evil eye. In this sense, this symbol helps to promote the idea of a united and tolerant nation because it is not associated with one particular religion but with a geographical area (Rogers 2012, p.3). Indeed, the khamisa is a symbol deeply rooted in North African and Moroccan imagery, and in Amazigh and Arab traditions goes beyond the connection with to protection to denote magic and fecundity (Achrati 2003, p.472). Further, the khamisa in Morocco constitutes also a reminder of the nation. In this case, a part of the human body, frequently used as a symbol of the nation (Mosse 1982, p.223; Baron 2004, p.57), serves as an object that promotes feelings of social solidarity as Emile Durkheim suggests in *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life* (1915). Elaine Combs-Schilling (1999, p.185) and Mohamed Daadaoui (2011, p.86; 2013, p.29) draw on Durkheim’s work to frame the ritual use of objects that the Moroccan monarchy uses to reenacts its power and authority.²⁸ They find that national objects and symbols, specially the flag, as Michael Billing (1995, p.8) argues, are in established nations a continual reminding of nationhood. This continuous reminder promotes an uncritical, positive evaluation of the nation (Schatz et al. 1999, p.153). The Moroccan flag, the white djellaba –as argued by Combs-Schilling (1999)– or as

²⁸ Section one of Chapter One further dwells on the establishment of these rituals as the monarchy’s symbols of power and legitimacy.

I argue here, the *khamisa* is employed as a symbol to protect the Makhzen status quo –that is, the perpetuations of an authoritarian state– and as a symbol against those who aim to challenge it. National symbols emerge thus as significant tools used by states to reinforce power in moments of crisis and in order to control dissent, for example in the US after 9/11 (Li & Brewer 2004, p.729; Merskin 2007, p.11; Schatz & Lavine 2007, p.330),²⁹ in Côte d'Ivoire during the 2002 to 2007 crisis (Schumann 2013) and in Morocco during 2003 and 2011 as will be argued later on in this chapter.



Figure 12. *Khamisa* in video clip "Matkich Bladi" (2004)

²⁹ After the World Trade Center attacks, the American flag as a symbol became a sign of unity and solidarity and all criticisms were considered unpatriotic; critics of US foreign policy were seen as enemies of the nation (Merskin 2007, pp.12–14).

The video clip of Fnaïre’s song “Matkich Bladi” was recorded in the city of Marrakech, and opens with a red khamisa [Figure 12]. The same image appears in the following scene when a DJ takes out an LP (long-play) album emblazoned with this same logo in its center, and puts it on to play. When the music starts, the scene changes and the four members of the crew pass through an archway with their palms pointed towards the camera, thus claiming the power of the khamisa to protect against the evil eye and all other manner of harm. The gesture is reenacted throughout the clip by numerous other actors. The use of the khamisa reinforces Fnaïre message both of unity and of love and protection for the country that appears at the end of the video where the group dedicates their CD to supporters and to the Moroccans that care for and protect their country.



Figure 13. Logo of the Association Matkich Bladi

The image of the *khamisa* is further used as the logo of the Association Matkich Bladi [Figure 13].³⁰ This association sprang up in the wake of the 2003 attacks to promote the unity of Moroccans against terrorism.³¹ Their motto “Don’t touch my country”³² is written in Darija and was spelled out in white letters inside a red hand. Though founders of the movement are unidentified, Amanda Rogers (2012, p.10) suggests that it emanated from the upper echelons of state. Rogers claims that after years of research working to trace the origins of the campaign, she has not been able to identify the founders (Ibid). The Matkich Bladi association does not have an official webpage or social media profile on Facebook or Twitter, but its image was everywhere around the country. During the first year of my fieldwork in 2011, I often found this image on billboards, stuck on car windows, or as in the case of Figure 13 which shows the logo of the association stuck on an ice-cream van taken in July 2011 in the northern village of Assilah. The association specifically campaigned in the public arena in three instances during 2003, 2010 and 2011 to counter the irruption of social dissent. After Matkich Bladi’s birth in 2003, in November 28, 2010 the group organized an event to mourn the Moroccans killed in Layoune after the confrontations between Moroccan soldiers and members of the pro-independence movement Polisario.³³ Then, in June 26, 2011 they organized another demonstration

³⁰ The motto of this association was created by SOS Racisme, an organization that used a hand with the motto Touch Pas à Mon Pote (Don’t touch my friend) (Rogers 2012, p.5). Other social movements have also appropriated the logo and name, like the association Matkich Wladi (Don’t Touch My Children) that fights for children’s rights, or Matkish el Mujaz (Don’t Touch the Graduates), an association of graduate students that use the logo in order to protest unemployment levels and to demand for jobs.

³¹ <http://yabiladi.com/articles/details/3765/casablanca-matkich-bladi-organise-manifestation.html> [Accessed February 28, 2014].

³² “*Ma Tqish Bladi.*”

³³ Polisario also known as Frente Polisario (Polisario Front) is an abbreviation of Frente Popular de Liberación de Saguía el Hamra y Río de Oro (Popular Front for the Liberation of Saguía el Hamra and Río de Oro). Section four of this chapter will further explain the implications of the Sahara conflict between Morocco and Polisario.

in support of the new constitution and against the M20F. In February 2011, they also released a press statement refusing to participate in the pro-democracy demonstration planned for February 20.³⁴ Matkich Bladi can be understood as promoting any form of dissent as divisive to the nation's unity. In 2003, with the terrorist attacks the organization glossed over the realities of Moroccan youth and the causes of their radicalization. In 2010, it presented the Sahara activists as divisive, without a cause and with the aim of destroying the country. This was also the case in 2011 in its stance against the M20F.³⁵ While other similar associations like Matkich Wladi (Don't Touch My Children) participated in demonstrations against the state (for example they protested against the pardoning of a Spanish-Iraqi pedophile by the king),³⁶ Matkich Bladi has only ever supported official narratives, which certainly seems to sustain Rogers' (2012, p.10) claims that they are in fact state sponsored.

The emergence of Matkich Bladi and its activities illustrates how the cultural meaning of the khamsa has been used in Morocco to fulfill the state's agenda. The same, I suggest, is true for Fnaïre, for whom the khamsa is not a symbol for all Moroccans, but only those who support the official narrative. Patriotic symbols not only aid in 'uniting' the nation against a 'perceived' enemy or danger, but are also strategic tools in transmitting uncritical perceptions of the state and its power. In this sense, acts of criticism outside the limits established by the regime – as Cavatorta and Dalmaso (2013, p.132) warn us – entail accusations of opposition and rebellion

³⁴ http://www.yabiladi.com/img/content/docs/Com-de-presse-touche-pas-a-mon-pays_18-02-2011.pdf [Accessed March 7, 2013].

³⁵ www.yabiladi.com/articles/printview/3765/casablanca-matkich-bladi-organise-manifestation.html [Accessed February 18, 2014]; <http://www.bladi.net/matquich-bladi-marche-20-fevrier.html> [Accessed February 18, 2014].

³⁶ <http://www.parismatch.com/Actu/International/Maroc-Tolle-apres-la-liberation-d-un-pedophile-523750>; <http://english.al-akhbar.com/node/16624> [Accessed February 18, 2014].

as the rapper L7a9ed (the enraged), sings in his song “Klab Dawla”³⁷ (Dogs of the State) (2010): “and when we talk about our rights, you call us rebels”³⁸ (see Chapter Four for further analysis). Even if, as Chapter One of this thesis demonstrates, the hegemonic narrative of the Moroccan official national identity has evolved through time adapting and absorbing alternative discourses of the nation, national symbols reenact the hegemonic construction of the nation and state power, in Morocco’s case, the Makhzen’s authoritarianism embodied in the motto, *Allah, El Watan, El Malik*. The association Matkich Bladi can thus be considered part of the Makhzen’s strategy to create or support the creation of civil society groups that portray an image of a liberal society and free association, while at the same time promoting the state’s agenda and quelling dissent (Cavatorta & Dalmasso 2013, p.123).

The song “Matkich Bladi” is still understood as a firm opposition to terrorism, and Hit Radio – a private music radio station and one of the most successful the youth³⁹ – played it again in May 2011 as a response to another terrorist attack on Café Argana, an establishment in the iconic Jmaa El Fnaa Square in Marrakech.⁴⁰ However, it is only one of a series of songs in Fnaïre’s repertoire that focus on patriotism. Other examples include “Yed el Henna”⁴¹ (The Hand of Henna) (2007), “Tajine Loughat”⁴² (Tajine of Languages) (2007) and “Hamra w 7adra”⁴³ (Red and Green) (2011). On Fnaïre’s official MySpace page the group states that

³⁷ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EAYZ7R5xmvk> [Accessed March 5, 2014].

³⁸ “*W mli kandwiw 3la 7a9na kat reddouna msakhit.*”

³⁹ <http://www.afrik.com/article22838.html> [Accessed May 23, 2013]; <http://j20.ma/8ans-apres-son-lancement-hitradio-la-1ere-radio-au-maroc-pour-les-jeunes/> [Accessed May 23, 2013].

⁴⁰ <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2011/apr/28/morocco-cafe-explosion-marrakech-argana> [Accessed March 21, 2013].

⁴¹ Though transliteration of the song title should read “Yedd El Henna” with double ‘d’ in the word *yedd*, I here follow the rapper’s transcription of the song’s title as “Yed el Henna” <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=b5WkB9ZW8kE> [Accessed February 20, 2014].

⁴² http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eTtX8C5_Qrg [Accessed May 13, 2014].

⁴³ <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fR6qxaLpZZM> [Accessed May 13, 2014].

they “don’t hesitate through national and patriotic spirit to develop and offer new and original tracks associated with the country.”⁴⁴ The word ‘patriotic’ is repeated three times in the social networking page’s short description of the group, and it appears twice together with the word ‘national.’ Though Fnaïre sees patriotism as a tool of engagement with the nation, their repetition of the same tropes in the songs that came out after “Matkich Bladi” (2003) like those recycled in “Hamra w 7adra” (2011) suggest otherwise. Fnaïre’s fidelity and reproduction of the Makhzen discourse distances the group from this profound engagement with the Moroccan society. Moreover, Fnaïre’s patriotic hip hop songs have allowed the group to develop a whole career based on this topic. Other groups such as H-Kayne have also extensively used patriotism as the regular subject of their songs. The next section examines the cultural production of Fnaïre and H-Kayne who reinforce the Makhzen’s narrative –articulated as the Moroccan ‘exception’ (Maghraoui 2011, p.681; Bouasria 2013, p.37)– that optimistically depicts Morocco as a country leading democratization in the Arabic-speaking region.

2. Endorsing the Moroccan ‘Exception’

The Moroccan ‘exception’ refers to the official narrative whereby Morocco is globally marketed as a religiously moderate country without religious terrorism, and guided by a monarchy in charge of securing the country’s future by pushing for democracy and political stability (Maghraoui 2011, p.681; Bouasria 2013, p.37). National and international media have articulated this as *l’exception Marocaine* (the Moroccan exception), and have reinforced the discourse of Morocco’s road to

⁴⁴ www.myspace.com/fnairemaroc [Accessed December 6, 2012]. This page has been modified and the text cited here no longer appears on Fnaïre’s *myspace* profile.

democracy and liberalism under the new king Mohammed VI (Laachir 2013b, p.45).⁴⁵ Even if there have been changes connected to the new king, reforms had started during the last years of King Hassan's reign.⁴⁶ As Willis argues (2009, p.232), Hassan II was aware that the political system was built around him as king, and therefore there was danger in leaving a void in Morocco's political system when the king died. The change of king in 1999 conveyed a moment of crisis that could endanger the continuity and legitimacy of the monarchy's hegemonic power. This moment, however, was reshaped as a point of inflexion with regard to Hassan II and the 'Lead Years,'⁴⁷ that is, a moment of improvement from dark years of repression (Zisenwine 2010, p.1). The new king is presented as key tool for the advance for the country. The idea of exceptionalism therefore suggest that the king is the central figure responsible for guiding Morocco toward its future and guaranteeing its stability because of the incapability of political parties and the unpreparedness of the population for democratic changes (for example due to the obstacle of illiteracy and the threat of Islamists movements) (Maghraoui 2011, p.681). Therefore, the narrative reinforces the king as commander of the faithful and affirms his authority (Laachir 2013b, p.45). This narrative seeks to promote Morocco as an exceptional country within the Arabic-speaking region because of its moderate Islam, reforms in the domain of human rights, freedom of the press, and increasing democratization and

⁴⁵ Ahmed Benchemsi's article "The Arab Exception" in *Politico Magazine*, March/April 2014 (http://www.politico.com/magazine/story/2014/02/morocco-the-arab-exception-103884.html#.Uw-DMkJ_v9d [Accessed February 27, 2014]) or *TelQuel's* (October 29, 2013) special issue "l'Exception Marocaine: du myth à la propagande" (<http://www.telquel-online.com/content/l%E2%80%99exception-marocaine-du-mythe-%C3%A0-la-propagande> [Accessed February 27, 2014]); or <http://www.marxist.com/morocco-constitutional-reform-will-not-save-regime.htm> [accessed March 7, 2013].

⁴⁶ See pp.11-12 of the Introduction.

⁴⁷ This was a period of time characterized by extreme repression that started in the 70s after Hassan II suffered two coup attempts and lasted until the mid-90s (Bennani-Chraïbi and Jeghlaly 2012, p.871).

therefore promoting the image of Morocco as a ‘modern’ country under the leadership of King Mohammed VI (Errihani 2013, p.57).

The strategic narrative of change to gain support for the new king, however, was seriously damaged after the terrorist attacks on May 16, 2003 in Casablanca. This event harmed Morocco’s international stance as a ‘democratizing monarchy’ and its image as a country exempt from Islamic extremism and terrorism (Maghraoui 2009, p.200; Bouasria 2013, p.37):

The Moroccan mosaic of religious tranquility has long been an image marketed to westerners and international donors to show them how the kingdom was fundamentally different from the Middle East hubs of radical Islamism and immune to the scourge of terrorism. (Bouasria 2013, p.37)

After the attacks it became apparent that the country was no exception to terrorism and that the militant Islamist phenomenon had taken root (Howe 2005, p.ix; Aboullouz 2011, p.161). Moreover, the terrorist attacks also meant that Morocco “was no longer protected by its political uniqueness behind the figure of the commander of the faithful” (Aboullouz 2011, p.160). In other words, the threat was not only to the country, but also to the ability of the king to protect it. The Casablanca bombings signified a moment of rupture for the country, when the symbols of the monarchy’s legitimacy proved to be weak.

The idea of exceptionalism was reinforced after the 2003 events by implementing changes that were demanded by secular groups, including reform of the Personal Status Code (*Moudawwana*), creating the Equity and Reconciliation Commission (*l’Instance d’Equité et Réconciliation* (IER)), and the establishment of

the National Development Initiative (INDH), a program that aimed at fighting poverty and exclusion.⁴⁸ The reforms boosted the image of King Mohammed VI as a modernizing and liberal ruler and, at the same time, presented the monarchy as the only institution able to fulfill the demands of the secular sectors (Cavatorta & Dalmaso 2013, p.128). Moreover, Mohammed VI used his status as ‘amīr al mu’minīn to make significant reforms in the religious law. As the second section of Chapter One argues, the religious discourse favored major Sufi groups such as Tariqa Boutchichi to counter its attacks Islamist movements (Bouasria 2013, p.38). The reforms not only allowed the Makhzen to maintain the idea of Morocco’s exceptionalism after the watershed of the Casablanca bombings, but to perpetuate its strategy of dividing of oppositional groups (See Cavatorta 2009).

The bombings, thus, fragmented civil society as the Makhzen managed to divide the secular from Islamic groups in the field of human rights, preventing a broad consensus (Cavatorta & Dalmaso 2013, p.129). The Makhzen tackled the rise of the PJD and namely the large support of Islamist movements by using cultural production to exhibit the narrative of exceptionalism. Belghazi & Graioud (2013, p.269) refer to the idea behind the king’s cultural patronage as the “modernist project.” This project is the cultural manifestation of Makhzen’s Moroccan ‘exception,’ and aims to support the king’s legitimacy together with religion and saintliness (Ibid). Belghazi & Graioud suggest that control over the cultural patronage system allows the Makhzen to contain the impact of the PJD and the Islamists as well as to present Morocco as a liberal, tolerant and modern country by sponsoring and funding big festivals and artists, and in particular Moroccan rappers.

⁴⁸ These reforms are further tackled in the introduction chapter of this thesis (pp.11-12).

After the 2003 attacks, the Makhzen applied the strategy of divide and conquer, supporting rappers such as Fnaïre or H-Kayne whose production was in line with the narrative of the Moroccan ‘exception.’ According to Hicham Abkari (2008), official media and television started to support rap groups, where before this support they had been belittled, but soon became well-paid artists. Both Fnaïre and H-Kayne participated in the first edition of the *Festival de Casablanca* in 2005,⁴⁹ and then again in the same festival in 2007.⁵⁰ H-Kayne has since participated in five editions of *Mawazine* festival⁵¹ gaining in its performance of 2008, as stated in Chapter Two (p.119), an extra royal don of 250,000 dirhams (£17,672). In January 2010, the members of H-Kayne were officially named as good will ambassadors for the UN (*Le Matin* January 20, 2011).⁵² As the second and third sections of Chapter One showed, H-Kayne and Fnaïre’s songs serve to market Morocco as a modern yet traditional country, but also after the terrorist attacks, Fnaïre’s “Matkich Bladi” (2004) or H-Kayne’s “Issawa Style” (2006), helped to encourage the optimistic narrative of the Moroccan ‘exception.’ As Mouhssine, a member of Fnaïre claims: “Fnaïre says to them [the youth] quite simply that a dose of optimism is always needed to move forward” (Mouhssine 2007). In the same way, H-Kayne claims to transmit “a message of optimism, in which we call on the youth to work.”⁵³ After the Casablanca bombings, therefore, the groups Fnaïre and H-Kayne echoed the narrative of optimism for the country’s future and democratic change under the

⁴⁹ <http://www.festivaldecasablanca.ma/artiste/archive/2005/> [Accessed May 13, 2014].

⁵⁰ <http://www.festivaldecasablanca.ma/artiste/archive/2007/> [Accessed May 13, 2014].

⁵¹ H-Kayne were invited to Mawazine in 2006, 2007, 2008, 2009 and 2013.

⁵² <http://www.lematin.ma/actualite/Journal/Article.asp?idr=110&id=145429> [Accessed February 24, 2014].

⁵³ <http://www.aljazeera.com/programmes/nextmusicstation/2011/05/2011510123548783842.html> [Accessed May 12, 2014].

leadership of the king. These songs provided a useful tool for the Makhzen to reach youth and for rappers to gain economic capital.

The optimism of Moroccan ‘exception’ is enacted by Fnaïre in the idea of development (in Arabic *tanmiyya*) in the first line of their song “Yed el Henna” (The Hand of Henna) (2007) when the rappers ask their audience to “listen, listen dear brother, stand up to develop.”⁵⁴ In this song, the development of the country and its progress requires the hand of henna, a symbol that Fnaïre uses to signify the king:

It’s clear that my country has the right with the hand of henna /Always pride for my country always with the hand of henna/Oh Moroccans, you promise me and I promise you with the hand of henna/With the desire that we participate in the development with the hand of henna⁵⁵

The power of the hand and its ability of protect the nation resonates the king’s *baraka* (blessing) (Sater 2010, p.6; Daadaoui 2011, p.4), or spiritual force (Willis & Maarouf 2010, p.7). The belief that king, who belongs to the prophetic lineage, will inherit the *baraka* is deeply rooted in the Moroccan cultural imagination (Willis & Maarouf 2010, p.7). Therefore, the hand of henna symbolizes the king’s power to protect all: “my hands in your hands, our king is your protector.”⁵⁶ This message of power and divinity is transmitted through the video clip by showing the picture of King Mohammed VI in the middle of a crowd of people representing Morocco [Figure 14]:

⁵⁴ “*Semmi semmi khouya l3ziz noud tnammi.*”

⁵⁵ “*bayn 7e99i fbladi bayn byedd l henna/Dayem 3azzi fbladi dayem byedd l henna/3ahdni ou n3ahdak ya maghribi byed l henna/Be nniya nssahmou f tanmiya byedd l henna.*”

⁵⁶ “*yddiya fydikoum malikna hamikoum.*”



Figure 14. Snapshot of video clip "Yed El Henna" (2007)

However, the hands also represent those of Moroccans who are required to stay together to develop the country. This track follows the narrative of "Matkich Bladi" (2004) in showing love and pride to the country, however, while the latter's use of national symbols is reduced to the khamisa, "Yed el Henna" showcases in the video clip the symbols of the flag, the king and the Sahara to depict their patriotic message. The crowd that appears on the video clip is varied, old and young, men and women, and they all appear carefully selected and dressed in the distinctive clothing of the Touareg or Beni Hassan nomads to represent Morocco's diversity.⁵⁷ In the first scenes, a member of the crew shows the palm of his hand as a symbol of protection and peace while women are making henna to reenact the beauty of a traditional life. The rappers are presented here as porte-paroles addressing the need for unity in order

⁵⁷ These are nomadic tribes living in the Sahara.

for Morocco to remain strong and look toward a better future. The chorus illustrates this narrative of consensus:

With the hand of henna we'll sweep off the weak and the ones that don't want to see/With the hand of henna we'll take off those who don't work or are too proud/With the hand of henna we'll take off the unjust and help the just/With the period of henna the justice will appear.⁵⁸

As Fnaïre suggests in their song “Matkich Bladi,” bad people will be expelled from the nation, this time using the hand of henna and not Fatima’s, though both embody the same idea of protection. The Moroccan hands represented through the henna are responsible of the country’s development: “Lets join in hands, today we develop our country.”⁵⁹ However, it is significant to note that that henna is only found on female hands, which feminizes the nation (Rogers 2012, p.2). In Morocco, Rogers (Ibid, p.3) argues that the hennaed hands have become a symbol for contemporary fine artists, a synecdoche for national identity in their search for sacred materials and local symbolism. In this sense, Beth Baron (2004, p.57) argues that although the nation appears personified as a male or a female, in the Middle East the female figure is predominant. Moreover, the nation is often feminized when the nation itself take a sacred character and when it requires great acts of sacrifice as suggested by the case of Joan of Arc, Britannia or Marianne. (Delanty & O’Mahony 2002, p.19). Therefore, the hand of henna and the khamsa are both related in their representation of the Moroccan nation as symbols of unity.

⁵⁸ “Byedd l7enna n7eydou errachi w l ghachi/Ou byedd l7enna n7iydou l3atal ou l3azzi/Ou byedd l7enna n7iydou eddalam ou n3awnou lmadloun/Ou 3ahd l7enna ghadi yban bih lmadmoun.”

⁵⁹ “Koulchi ghaydir ydih, lyoun tnamma lbled.”

The theme of *tanmiyya* (development) whereby young Moroccans are required to be united in optimism and look to the future, is also emphasized in a song performed by rappers Rwapa Crew and rock band Babel, winners of the talent contest Génération Mawazine in 2011.⁶⁰ The entire song, “Feels So Right”⁶¹ (2012), echoes the themes of development, education, unity, and a better future that Fnaïre’s also established:

Hand in hand united/and anyone intending to harm the country will sink/and you tell me
what’s wrong with them/those people making trouble/Criticism became like fashion/keep
in mind this is a land of bravery/and bravery was never meant to be for sale/we have hope
and we’ll build our future.⁶²

In these lines, Rwapa Crew claim that criticism can only come from the enemies of the nation, while those who defend it are brave. This verse suggests that development occurs without criticism. The activist and filmmaker Younes Belghazi claims, “people in Morocco don’t make the difference between being critical of the system and being with the nation, with your nation” (2013, interview, March 18). He suggests that when it comes to dealing with the nation those who criticize it are portrayed as enemies, just as songs like “Matkich Bladi” (2004), “Yed el Henna” (2007), “Feels So Right” (2012) construct an image of the enemy who is oppositional. In fact, this opposition can be read as anyone who does not share the Makhzen’s hegemonic narrative on development, territorial integrity, or politics.

⁶⁰ Chapter Two deals with this song and argues that the Makhzen capitalizes politically on urban spaces to co-opt and control youth.

⁶¹ <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UG4T9OuTHmI> [Accessed May 13, 2014].

⁶² “Ndirou yed fyed nta7do/Ou li baghi y9iss leblad ymchi foundou/Goul li nta ach 3ando/Baghi ydir lfouda/Wella 3andna ghir moda/Hadi ard rjal koun 3la bal/Ou roujoula 3andna ma katba3 b lmal/Mazal 3andna amal ndirou lmousta9bal.”

Moreover, the patriotism within these songs, as Hicham Abkari (2008) suggests, search for official acceptance as Fnaïre and H-Kayne's songs focus on the country's beauty instead of on the country's deep social malaises including high levels of poverty, corruption or illiteracy. At the end of the song "Attarikh"⁶³ (The History) (2008) Fnaïre portrays Moroccans with smiling faces to create a narrative of a happy country: "There are happy and smiley faces, our meeting is today."⁶⁴ This same narrative is employed by H-Kayne in the song "Bladi"⁶⁵ (My Country) (2006): "nice people there who have a nice smile;"⁶⁶ "Generosity and goodness/you can find everything here/its people are hospitable/and you can take whatever you want/wherever you go you find nice people... *H-Kayne*, goodness, goodness/my country is good."⁶⁷ These songs also refer to how Morocco's rich landscape of mountains, desert and sea shape Morocco, as if they were reading from a tourism brochure. Though Morocco has a beautiful landscape, these songs do not engage with other locations that epitomize social issues such as poor, urban neighborhoods as other rap video clips in Morocco as Chapter Four will demonstrate. Images used in the video clip of "Yed el Henna," such as the tent in the Sahara, the diverse and colorful garments, and the camel, are frequently employed by the tourism industry to brand Morocco (Gover & Go 2009, pp.230, 238, 282). For example the logo of the Moroccan National Tourist Office uses palm trees and the desert to promote tourism.⁶⁸ Fnaïre intermingles these images with patriotic symbols, such as the flag,

⁶³ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nSdRcfEl0jk> [Accessed March 12, 2014].

⁶⁴ "Lwjouh fer7ana mbessma maw3idna lyoum."

⁶⁵ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T8b8kXdyYnE> [Accessed March 4, 2014].

⁶⁶ "nass lkhir hadouk s7ab da7ka lmebchoura."

⁶⁷ "Lkhir ou ljoud koulchi moujoud/Maliha mdyafine, ghi hezz w khoud/fin ma mchiti tel9a nassha draf mzyanine/H-Kayne khir khir/bladi bikhir."

⁶⁸ <http://www.visitmorocco.com/index.php/eng/Home> [Accessed February 27, 2014].

the picture of the king or the Green March,⁶⁹ to create Morocco as ‘cool’ and trendy product.

Particularly, H-Kayne has continued to reproduce this narrative in patriotic singles and video clips produced since they released their last album in 2009. In addition to Othman’s “Maghreb 1 Machi 2” (Morocco 1 not 2) (2010) or “A la Marocaine”⁷⁰ (2011), both analyzed in section four of this chapter, H-Kayne released a song and video clip, “Panthera Leo Leo,”⁷¹ (2013) in support of the national football team.⁷² The track “Panthera Leo Leo” is a collaboration with the Dutch comedians De Borrelnootjez that promotes patriotism through football as the description of the video clip claims that the purpose of this song is to show pride and love for Morocco: “We do this out of love and pride for our country.”⁷³ The latest H-Kayne single released in May 2014, “Safi, Tfe Dow”⁷⁴ (Enough, Put the Lights Off), repeats the group’s patriotic leitmotifs: “*bladi bladna*” (my country is our country); “*bladi ard jdadi*” (my country is the country of my grandparents); “*mgharba dima mgharba*” (Moroccans are always Moroccans) and “*khouk ana*” (I’m your brother). These are phrases they have used since their first hit “Issawa Style” (2006).⁷⁵ The metaphor of light in the song’s title suggests an end to criticism. In reproducing the Makhzen’s narrative of exceptionalism, rappers like Fnaïre and H-Kayne are not

⁶⁹ The Green March event is explained in Chapter One (p.63).

⁷⁰ <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TkZreRE5Ees> [Accessed May 13, 2014].

⁷¹ <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5THArOnlzAk> [Accessed February 5, 2014].

⁷² This song was not released for a specific tournament.

⁷³ “*Wij doen dit vanuit liefde en trots voor ons vaderland*” <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5THArOnlzAk> [Accessed February 5, 2014].

⁷⁴ The single was released live on channel 2M on Moroccan public TV on Saturday night May 17, 2014. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5zi8k25VGgI&list=UUJUT2tWgSa2MXAqJnh_vDGA [Accessed May 19, 2014].

⁷⁵ “*Bladi ard jdadi*” is also used in the song “Bladi” (2006) and “*Khouk ana*” in several lines of “Issawa Style” (2006).

only serving powerful interests, but have personally benefitted, gaining fame and wealth.

This successful marketing strategy used by groups like Fnaïre of H-Kayne has been emulated by other members of the hip hop community who profit by using a patriotic brand to sell their product. This is the reason for rapper Hamid VFF's participation in Festival *Mawazine* 2014. Hamid VFF is a rather unknown rapper from Casablanca whose work has not achieved great success. Nevertheless, in December 2013 he released the song "Familla"⁷⁶ (Family), which highlights Moroccan pride and brotherhood through empty lyrics that constantly repeat his sense of belonging within the Moroccan nation. The video clip also employs the Moroccan flag to highlight words in Arabic such as *watan* (nation) or *mghrebi* (Moroccan) and in French, such as the chorus, "*Ma nation, ma fierté*" (My nation, my pride). Hamid's participation in a big international music festival like *Mawazine* sends the message to artists that in order to achieve economic capital and be visible in the Moroccan music scene, they need to produce patriotic music. Another example of this trend is the former and well-known rapper Barry who announced the release of the first single called "Sahra Dialna" (Our Sahara) of his forthcoming album in January 2014. The cover image used to promote this song reproduces the map of Morocco, including the Sahara area, and employs many of the territorial unity clichés discussed in this chapter.⁷⁷ Despite Barry's announcement and the media's promotion of the single picture, by May 2014, this song had still not been released for unknown reasons. Barry's event confirms that these patriotic rap songs are not

⁷⁶ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UyoyUd04QUU> [Accessed February 27, 2014].

⁷⁷ http://www.aujourd'hui.ma/maroc/culture/nouveau-single-barry-lance-%C2%ABsahra-dialna%C2%BB-dans-deux-semaines-107401#.UwzgukJ_v9c [Accessed May 12, 2014].

significant for the cultural field as music production, but rather a strategy of artists to serves the Makhzen and earning money without and .

The idea that patriotism and national unity sells has also been acknowledged by the advertising industry. US rappers like Ice Cube have participated in advertisements in exchange for large amounts of money (Chang 2005, p.250). In Morocco, companies have used hip hop in their commercials, for example Nescafé organized a contest for hip hop dancers where the winners would participate in a new spot. Casablanca rapper Tanzzy⁷⁸ represented H&S, and H-Kayne represented Dan-Up.⁷⁹ The most significant of these adverts is a 2007 song and video clip for a Maroc Telecom company to promote its new label Mobisud. Rapper Don Bigg, H-Kayne and the singers Steph Ragga Man and Khansa Batma collaborated in the song “Sma3ni”⁸⁰ (Listen to me) (2007) that focuses on the importance of Moroccan national unity in order to improve communication. The idea of brotherhood is central in this song. As Othman from H-Kayne sings: “I just want to say Moroccans are brothers and they got together to open doors, hand-in-hand we can change and communicate.”⁸¹ Don Bigg claims, “Moroccans, we are all brothers,”⁸² and “your brother is Moroccan in his heart.”⁸³ Sif Lssane ends a verse by defining Moroccans: “Moroccans are men from the mountains able to uplift the nation/this is a mark which will stay in our hearts.”⁸⁴ In all these verses, the rappers focus on the role of men as they talk about *khout* (brothers) or *rjal* (men), ignoring the role of women in the Moroccan national consciousness. Therefore, women as sisters and part of the

⁷⁸ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nuGAinSC1jE&feature=g-user-u> [Accessed May 12, 2014].

⁷⁹ This commercial was released in 2005 and it has not been uploaded online.

⁸⁰ <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4J9X-cMJSbk> [Accessed February 24, 2014].

⁸¹ “*bghit ngoul mgharba khout w 7bab tta7do 7ollo l bwab, l yed f l yed nghayro nwasselo.*”

⁸² “*kolna khout lmgharba.*”

⁸³ “*khoukom f l galb meghribi.*”

⁸⁴ “*mgharba rjal wlad l jbal gaddine b l wtane/hadchi f jowwala limara f l gloub me7touta.*”

family are discarded, despite Khansa Batma's participation in this song. Despite feminist accomplishments with the new Family Code working towards women's equality in Morocco, the rappers' discourse is also present in the king's speeches in which "Moroccan women are presented as a nameless and faceless mass and as generic, passive and reactive people, who are present in history, but never as agents who initiate historical processes" (Kozma 2003, p.127).

Yet, despite the fact that these rappers overlook women, they claim unity in the song "Sma3ni": "your hand in my hand, we could do something together. God's hand is with unity."⁸⁵ Moreover, they vilify those who aim to break this unity, such as when rapper Sif Lssane from H-Kayne sings, "Why do you want to break the group?"⁸⁶ He follows with, "Those who want to divide us will never succeed."⁸⁷ Within this binary narrative of good and bad Moroccans, rapper Hatim tells the audience not to hang up (the phone) because "you're the one that separates us"⁸⁸ referring to the need to stay together. Similarly, Steph Ragga Man sings, "We should stay away from the wrong path."⁸⁹ These artists produce a message of national unity for advertisements the same way they do in their rap songs. In the same way, Maroc Telecom profits from patriotic messages and from the popularity of these rappers among the youth to sell their product. This advert reflects the extent to which patriotism is a product of consumption in Morocco, commodifying patriotism and suggesting that national unity, love and Moroccanness are dependent on Maroc Telecom. In order to show your love for the nation and certify you are not a

⁸⁵ "yeddik fi yeddia ghadi n9adro ndiro chi 7aja, yed lah ma3a l jama3a."

⁸⁶ "lach baghine tfertko rba3a."

⁸⁷ "lli baghi y9essmo bina l lblad mo7al tessda9."

⁸⁸ "c'est toi qui nous sépare."

⁸⁹ "nba3do 3la tri9 l 7ram o man be3d."

separatist, you must consume Maroc Telecom. Patriotism is thus commodified and branded into a product sold by the state and those artists favored by the Makhzen. The next section explores voices that have spoken against this use of rap music, critically engaging with the fact that these rappers do not contribute to the cultural field. Patriotic rappers are categorized by other rappers and cultural actors as opportunists whose only aim is to gain state support and funding.

3. Critical Response to Patriotic Narratives in Rap

Previous to the 2011 uprisings, as the previous sections evidence, patriotic rap songs were well established in Morocco.⁹⁰ This trend can be compared to Palestine where rap groups' – like DAM or MWR – patriotic songs are perceived as an act of resistance against Israeli occupation (Massad 2005, p.194). Patriotic rap songs in Morocco, however, do not come out as acts of opposition rather as co-opted music production. In looking at the development of the patriotic music phenomenon in the MENA region, Joseph Massad has pointed out that Egyptian singers like Abd al-Wahhab or Umm Kulthum “proved to be more politically mobile than the constituencies their songs mobilized” (Massad, 2005, p.177). These artists not only sang for revolutionary causes, but also for the country's monarchy, which was supported by colonial forces (Ibid). Moroccan rappers who produce patriotic rap songs are engaging in similar processes of co-option, but have been exposed by other rappers and cultural actors as opportunists in search of economic gain instead of contributing to the development of the cultural field.

⁹⁰ The map of patriotic rap songs after the 2011 uprisings deserves a deep and contextualized analysis. For example the success of El General, a Tunisian rapper who openly denounced Ben Ali's authoritarianism, has prompted a high number of revolutionary and patriotic rap songs in Tunisian rap (<http://newton.jadaliyya.com/pages/index/2320/rap-rage-revolt> [Accessed May 12, 2014]).

Critical sectors of the cultural field like the official magazine of the music festival *L'Boulevard* and artists such as Reda Allali from the fusion group Hoba Hoba Spirit and rapper Mobydick, have called the phenomenon of Moroccan patriotic rap songs “*watanounism*.” This is an invented hybrid word that combines the Arabic word *watan* (nation) with the French suffix *-isme* attached at the end. In French, *-isme* usually refers to an opinion or an attitude.⁹¹ In this way, the word *watanisme*, as it appears in Baduel (1992, p.237), or with the English suffix *watanism*, as in Lukitz (1995, p.160), seldom appears in essays referring to nationalism with no negative connotations. Normally, watanounism is simply named “patriotic rap” as for example in *TelQuel* (February 12, 2011) or in the interviews with Salah Malouli (2011, interview, December 8) or Younes Belghazi (2013, interview, March 18). Although the word *watanounism* is not significantly used in Morocco it has been used in two articles in different Moroccan francophone magazines, *Lkounache del Boulevard* (L’Boulevard Notebook) (2009) and *TelQuel* (October 8, 2010),⁹² to openly criticize the patriotic trend in Moroccan rap.

In 2009, the official magazine of the music festival *L'Boulevard des Jeunes Musiciens*, *Lkounache del Boulevard*, which is published once a year, briefly highlighted its criticism of patriotic in an article called “Rap: les 7 péchés capitaux” (Rap: The 7 Capital Sins) that discusses the sins committed by the newly created Moroccan rap scene. The article comments on watanounism by claiming that:

There are [rappers] specialists on patriotic demagogy. The kind of guys who make the new niche of “Neo-Nationalistic Rap.” Suddenly, as if they had just been naturalized

⁹¹ <http://www.etudes-litteraires.com/suffixes.php> [Accessed May 9, 2014].

⁹² http://w.telquel-online.com/archives/441/zb_441.shtml [Accessed July 23, 2014].

Moroccan, they begin to shout their love to the country without anyone asking them anything. (*Lkounache del Boulevard* 2009, p.27)

The article labels these songs as “patriotic demagogy” and “neo-nationalistic rap.” In referring to this rap as “demagogic” it reflects the idea that rappers whose songs fall into *watanounist* narratives practice a kind of patriotism that appeals to people’s desires without argument. In contrast to Palestinian patriotic rap songs, patriotic Moroccan songs are perceived as demagogic and submissive because, contrary to the nationalist movement and patriotic feelings that arose during Morocco’s period of struggle for independence, the article’s author perceives this new patriotism as senseless. By adding the prefix “neo” to the definition, the author differentiates the patriotism currently springing up within the rap scene from patriotic songs that emerged during the struggle for independence from the French and Spanish colonial rules. This article therefore considers, as Paul Gilroy (2004, p.87) claims, that adding “neo” to the term nationalism requires to differentiate contemporary discourses from older ones. This prefix suggests a new kind of nationalism embedded in new forms of cultural production that must be contextualized. In this sense, the new term directly refers to groups such as Fnaïre and H-Kayne as was pointed out by Zakaria Boualem, the alter ego of Reda Allali, the leader of the *fusion* group Hoba Hoba Spirit in an article on *TelQuel* (October 8, 2010).⁹³ Allali’s weekly column, written in a sarcastic tone, describes the rap group Fnaïre as “a rap group that suffers from intense watanounisme” (Ibid). This criticism of patriotic rap stems from the simplicity of the lyrics as the previous section argues, but also the commercial success of these songs.

⁹³ http://w.telquel-online.com/archives/451/zb_451.shtml [Accessed July 23, 2014].

The phenomenon has been identified and is frequently criticized by an audience that perceives these songs as empty of significance. During my fieldwork, I delivered several lectures on Moroccan patriotic rap to undergraduate students in Rabat. This was at the Cross Cultural Center Learning (CCCL), which caters mostly to Americans studying abroad and some Moroccan students. During the presentation of some of Moroccan rap video clips, some Moroccan students pointed out that these rappers included patriotic issues like territorial unity, however, said nothing in the rest of the song. Moreover, the students referred to this phenomenon as a marketing strategy to find an easy way to access to Moroccan radio stations. This strategy was also mentioned by the activist and filmmaker Younes Belghazi during an informal conversation previous to our interview on March 18, 2013. Belghazi claimed that by employing patriotic discourses, rappers such as Fnaïre or H-Kayne, gain favor from the state, that is, they are promoted on the radio or are able to participate in music festivals. Rapper Mobydick called these artists “opportunists.”

We come back to something that has always worked in Morocco. It is very easy, it goes quickly, radios accept it, associations accept it, the stages, you can find a lot of people who include you in the program because you sang a song about this theme... What I'm trying to say is that except someone that stands out, the rest they all do the same thing, and usually if you get into the guts of the Moroccan art you will understand that it is opportunistic. (Mobydick 2013, interview, July 5)⁹⁴

Miller and Caubet point out that this is the case of a group like Fnaïre: “This patriotic position has allowed them to be very well relayed in the media and festivals, which is

⁹⁴ “On revient à faire un truc qui a toujours marché au Maroc, c'est très facile, ça passe rapidement, les radios l'acceptent, les associations l'acceptent, les sur scène tu peux trouver pas mal de gens qui vont te programmer parce que tu as chanté un morceau sur ce thème là, alors... Ce que j'essaie de te dire c'est que sauf une exception qui se démarque le reste ils font tous la même chose, et généralement si tu rentres dans les entrailles de l'art marocain tu comprendras que c'est des opportunistes.”

far from being the case of the most rebellious rappers” (Miller & Caubet 2012, p.4). Mobydick, who is also known as *Lmoutchou* reproduces this criticism in his song “Checkmate”⁹⁵ (2011), “Lmoutchou independent and sick of odes, fuck patriotic rap.”⁹⁶ Between humorous lines in the song “Checkmate,” directly attack on rappers like Fnaïre, H-Kayne and Don Bigg whose lyrics avoid any meaningful criticism of the country’s political elite, Moroccan authorities, or official institutions. Mobydick specifically denounces Don Bigg in the video clip of “Checkmate” [See Figure 3]. At the start of the video Mobydick identifies to the Moroccan Makhzen as culprit when the rapper alleges: “the freedom of speech is today in danger;”⁹⁷ adding: “fuck Abbass Nazi,” referring to Abbas Fassi Fihri, a figure who allows rappers to denounce nepotism and corruption in the Moroccan elite.⁹⁸ Other rappers such as Dizzy DROS and Muslim have criticized patriotically themed rap in their songs.

In his song “7ob LWatan”⁹⁹ (Love of the Nation) (2009), Muslim questions why one should love the nation when the nation does not give anything in return. In this song the rapper claims that a small ruling elite that despises the impoverished in Morocco governs the country. He says in the chorus, “My country didn’t give me anything, but wants love from me.”¹⁰⁰ He also refers to social issues such as the hardship of poverty: “It’s hard to love a country where you don’t even have a parcel of land/It gives you cold and hunger and doesn’t give you work/If you want to live,

⁹⁵ <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VxagfDYjHS4> [Accessed May 13, 2014].

⁹⁶ “*Moutchou autonome mes9oum bel anachid, fuck rap del wataniya.*” (*Lmoutchou* is one of his nicknames further explained in section four of Chapter Five).

⁹⁷ “*7ouriyate te3bire lyouma 9faret.*”

⁹⁸ This idea is developed in Chapter Five section two.

⁹⁹ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HpVfoOjexqI> [Accessed May 10, 2014].

¹⁰⁰ “*bladi ma3tani walo baghi menni l7ob.*”

you have to pay electricity and water.”¹⁰¹ He sings that, in spite of social injustices, loyalty to the nation is forced upon the people from an early age: “Since you were small, you were drawing the star/and now when you grow up, it became your tattoo/The star is always up high in the sky/And you are on the ground standing on only one foot.”¹⁰² Through these powerful lines, Muslim employs the star to symbolize the fact that elites stand above the people. Moreover the image of the tattoo refers to the difficulty in rebelling, as oppression is so pervasive. The star and the country in this song represent the power of the elites, that is, the Makhzen. According to Muslim, although one only realizes their oppression when ones grows up, it begins in childhood: “You’ll never understand that the country is the one responsible/ they planted fear in us when we were in primary school/ since we were small they taught us to fear the beast/ when we grew up we knew that the beast is the country.”¹⁰³ Instead of referring directly to the Makhzen, Muslim employs the word “beast.” As Muslim explained in our interview:

When we were small and wanted to talk about something everybody used to tell us shut up don't talk about this and that. Moms used to say: don't go there because there's a monster, and when we grew up we figured that this monster doesn't exist and there's another monster which is the... the...¹⁰⁴

¹⁰¹ “S3ib tbghi bled ma3andek fih hta radma/3tak lberd o jou3 o ma3tak lkhedma/ida konti baghi t3ich khalass daw o lma.”

¹⁰² “melli konti sghir o nta tarssem f nejma/daba melli kbarti kabrat m3ak wechma/nejma dayman fo9 3alya f sma/o nta fo9 l2ard mkali ghir b zatma.”

¹⁰³ “bach 3omrek matfham blli dawla hiya lmas2oula/zar3o fina lkhawf o hna ba9in f sana oula/melli kona sghar 3alamtouna nkhafo min lghola/melli kbarna 3rafna belli lghola hiya dawla.”

¹⁰⁴ “7na mli kouna sghar koulchi ki 9ol lk matalan mli ka tbghi thdar f chi 7aja ki 9ol lk skout, fhamtini ma thdarch f hadi ma thdarch f hadi, walakin 7na mli kouna sghar ka t9ol lk lwalida dyalk la ma tmchich temma ra temma lghoula, mli kberna ya3ni 3rafna bli dik lghoula ma kinachi walakin kayna ghoul akhra hiya... hiya...”

Although Muslim does not directly point it out, by employing recognizable metaphors in this song, Muslim constructs a highly critical and resistant discourse on the nation, blaming the Makhzen for the people's poverty and hardship.

As watanounism, H-Kayne and Fnaïre's enthusiastically positive depiction of the county has been also discursively constructed through another neologism: *3amzinism* (good year). This is an ironic term that translates as those who are over optimist and blind to reality. *3amzinists* are those Moroccans who follow and perpetuate the narrative of the Moroccan 'exception.' *3amzinism* is composed of two words one in Arabic 'am (year), and the other in Darija, *zwine* (nice, good). This term appears in the chorus of a Hoba Hoba Spirit song called "Grimma Awards" (2013)¹⁰⁵ that denounces artist that side with the Makhzen and receive the state's support in form of grimma in turn. The rapper Mobydick employs this term in his single "7izb L3am Zine"¹⁰⁶ (The Everything Goes Well Party) (2009). The rapper mocks the use of the hands, such as the examples in Fnaïre or in Rwapa Crew songs, to symbolize unity: "Here is my speech full of promises/I am telling you, just lend me your ear/My citizen sister, my citizen brother/Hand-in-hand we work the country, we build tomorrow, come closer/I will find a place where the unemployed can live."¹⁰⁷ The unity promoted by rapper Mobydick includes women highlighting the female participants in politics by directing the discourse also to fellow sisters as well as brothers that contrast to the song "Sma3ni" where H-Kayne and Don Bigg overlooked women as part of the nation. Mobydick starts a fictitious speech in an

¹⁰⁵ https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yaAyIYW9QOU&list=PLhiMkV_Zx2B2X8-LylAz4uBcSxJq3ycX6&index=4 [Accessed May 12, 2014].

¹⁰⁶ <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=crYIY7DC0Ls> [Accessed May 12, 2014].

¹⁰⁷ "Hak khetabi koullou wou3oud ngoulik ghi 3teni woudnik/Oukhti l'mouwatena, Akhi l'mouwaten/L'yed fe l'yed n'khed mou l'blad, n'bniw l'ghed wa zid 9errebb/N'dir l'choumour fine yetkhebbu."

ironic tone where the rapper makes promises of better education and employment and also promises the people he will get rich: “If you want money ‘Yes we can’/If you want to give me your vote and see me rich ‘Yes we can.’”¹⁰⁸ This line draws on Barack Obama’s presidential campaign to present the political process as a way to realizing the impossible. Transmitting this ideas is particularly significant in Morocco, where the Makhzen benefits from the people’s lack of confidence in politicians precisely because it wants to perpetuate the figure of the king as the only one capable of instituting democratic changes (Maghraoui 2011, p.681). Furthermore, the chorus of “7izb L3am Zine” ridiculizes the optimistic narratives of Fnaïre or H-Kayne: “Everybody says it’s a good year/The product of the country is good/There’s no reason to live scared/Everybody says it’s a good year/The economy of our country is destroying China/There’s no reason to live angry.”¹⁰⁹ In denouncing the ideal portrayal of the country, Mobydick’s song gives voice to a sector of the Moroccan society that claims that the changes brought by Mohammed VI are cosmetic and that many are not benefitting from the neo-liberal market economy and instead becoming further impoverished. Similarly, Dizzy DROS’ album *3azzy 3ando Stylo* (Nigga Got a Style) (2013) includes lines in different songs like the song “L’Benj”¹¹⁰ (Anesthesia) (2013) as stated at the end of Chapter One that hint at the rapper’s contempt for Fnaïre.

Though rappers who focus on patriotic themes gain income and public exposure, there are spaces for the artists and audience to express their opinion of different artists. Through their music production, artists are able to disseminate their

¹⁰⁸ “*Li baghi l’flouss? Yes We can!/La bghiti te3teni soteK we tchoufni boucou flouss? Yes We can!*”

¹⁰⁹ “*Koulchi ygoul l3am zine/Mentouj leblad zine/Makayn lach n3ichou khayfine/Koulchi ygoul l3am zine/9tesad bladna fare3 Sine/Makayn lach n3ichou fagsine.*”

¹¹⁰ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FdhjRKUXFf8&list=UUy3aXKl3MmWXGj2mmxT9AsA> [Accessed March 24, 2014].

criticism of repetitive patriotic themes to their audience. Furthermore, the fact that this criticism is expressed in different forms emphasizes the idea that the Makhzen's strategies are well known and not always effective. Nevertheless, despite the criticism that patriotic songs have engendered, rappers such as H-Kayne and Fnaïre continue to include these songs in their cultural production. These songs are specially useful to support political narratives that claim that dissident voices threaten the nation. The following section explores patriotic rap songs released during the 2011 uprisings to argue that some rappers actively contribute the Makhzen's containment of oppositions and dissent.

4. Serving Power: Fighting the Makhzen's Enemy

Patriotic rap has been a useful tool for the Makhzen during the recent periods of social unrest during 2010 and 2011 when the status quo of the nation, its official narrative and its alleged territorial unity were endangered by unrests in the Sahara region and the prodemocracy demonstrations. The Makhzen has used patriotism as a tool to define insiders, but more significantly, to define the enemy. It is in such a way that nations construct enemies in order to justify violence or aggression against them (Searle-White 2001, p.16). As before pointed out, patriotic songs discussed earlier praise the country's unity, however, they are in fact dividing the country in two: those who support the status quo, patriots, and those who criticize it, enemies. As Ernest Laclau argues, the enemy is a discursive construction used by political movements to divide the "'people' against an enemy through the construction of a social frontier" (2005, p.47). Stam & Shohat present patriotism in the US framed within the right-wing narrative, as designed to "turn neighbor against neighbor, one half of the country against the other half, all calculated to as a way to win elections"

(2007, p.293). The narrative is supported by politicians who use patriotism to justify wars and suppress dissent (Ibid, p. 297). In this case, patriotism is a weapon of exclusion rather than unity (Shohat & Stam 2007, p.293).

Previous sections argued that the Makhzen capitalized on the terrorist attacks of 2003 to contain the rise of the PJD. This section suggests that the Makhzen's support of rap since 2003 paid off when popular rappers supported the Makhzen and helped to suppress the pro-democracy movement that emerged in 2011. During a brief period of time between the end of 2010 and the beginning of 2011, events in the Sahara region and the pro-democracy February 20 demonstrations inspired new patriotic reactions, including rap songs. In October 2010, previous to the celebrations of the anniversary of the Green March on November 6, protesters for the movement for the Independence of the Sahara built a new camp outside Layoune, the capital of the disputed Western Sahara region. In November 8, 2010 clashes erupted when Moroccan gendarmes entered and dismantled the camp.¹¹¹ The clash resulted in the death of five Moroccans and a Polisario member according to some sources,¹¹² and eleven Moroccan officers and two civilians according to other sources.¹¹³ These events prompted a big demonstration on November 28, 2010 in Casablanca in support of the 'Moroccanness' of the Sahara organized by the association Matkich Bladi to honor the dead in Layoune (*TelQuel* February 12, 2011, p. 21).¹¹⁴

¹¹¹ <http://www.hrw.org/news/2010/11/26/western-sahara-beatings-abuse-moroccan-security-forces> [Accessed May 13, 2014].

¹¹² <http://fr.euronews.com/2010/11/09/violents-affrontements-a-laayoune-sahara-occidental/> [Accessed May 13, 2014].

¹¹³ <http://www.hrw.org/news/2010/11/26/western-sahara-beatings-abuse-moroccan-security-forces> [Accessed May 13, 2014].

¹¹⁴ <http://yabiladi.com/articles/details/3765/casablanca-matkich-bladi-organise-manifestation.html> [Accessed March 7, 2013].

However, defending the right to sovereignty of the Western Sahara is a significant event, even for those groups that are today recognized as the champions of the revolutionary song in Morocco. The group JilJilala, whose founder was a member of Nass El Ghiwane, created a well-known song called “Laayoune Aynia” (Layoune are My Eyes) in 1976 to glorify the Green March. After the 2010 events in Layoune, pictures of a member Fnaïre members posing alongside demonstrations were posted on their official Facebook profile.¹¹⁵ Fnaïre had indicated already referenced the Sahara issue in the video clip of “Yed el Henna,” where the group recreated the Green March in a video that showcased a varied group of people as a way to represent the diversity of Moroccan identity, and also included the Moroccan flag and the picture of King Mohammed VI.

The November 2010 demonstration united rappers and other artists across the country in support of Moroccan unity appearing at the end of the video clip for the song “Maghreb 1 Machi 2”¹¹⁶ (Morocco 1 not 2) (2011) by rapper Othman, a member of H-Kayne and rapper M-Snoop. The chorus of the song tells Moroccans that the country must remain united: “Morocco one not two, one land not two, one nation not two, one nation not two, better one united nation.”¹¹⁷ This unity, the song claims, must be under the leadership of the king: “One two, not two, one people, we’ve only got one country, we got only one king, he is number one, the one that wants to mess around gets run over by a train.”¹¹⁸ The repetition of one is explicit,

¹¹⁵ <https://www.facebook.com/ONWIRECORDS/photos/pb.145932825441159.-2207520000.1399971135./169065419794566/?type=3&theater> [Accessed May 13, 2014].

¹¹⁶ <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F0lc6o9Z2B4&list=UUe7iYciaOsIFMRBCoHAUlog&feature=c4-overview> [Accessed February 28, 2014].

¹¹⁷ “*Maghreb wa7d machi juj, ard wa7da machi juj, sha3b wa7d machi juj, mzyan wahd munta7ad*”

¹¹⁸ “One two, *machi* two, one *sha3b 3andna ghi*, one *blad 3andna ghi*, one *malik huwa* number one, *lli bgha lkhwad darbo train*.”

and reinforced by each of the rappers who raise their index finger during the video clip [Figure 15].

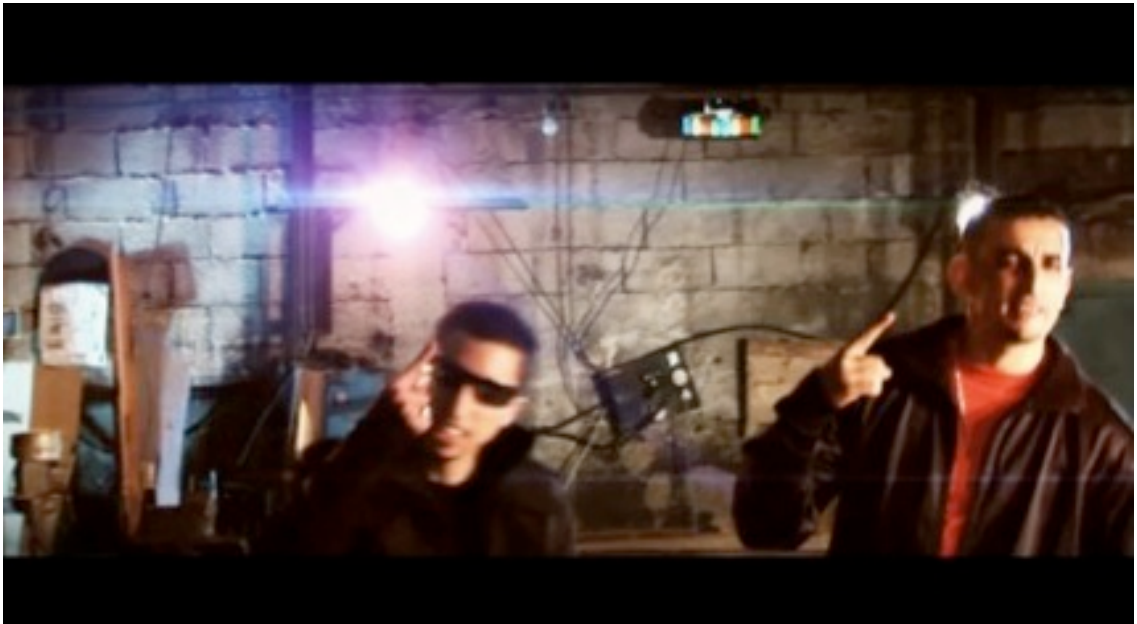


Figure 15. Snapshot of video clip "Maghreb 1 Machi 2" (2011)

As Figure 15 shows, Othman and M-Snoop use the gesture at the beginning of the video clip "Maghreb 1 Machi 2" after both rappers repeat the chorus and M-Snoop holds up the Moroccan flag. In the final scene of the clip all members of the rap group H-Kayne and M-Snoop repeat the gesture while staged behind the Moroccan flag [Figure 16]. This sign of unity also appears on the cover of Fnaïre's album *Yed el Henna* (2007) [Figure 17], and at the end of the video clip of "A la Marocaine"¹¹⁹ (2011) by Hatim of H-Kayne [Figure 18].

¹¹⁹ <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TkZreRE5Ees> [Accessed July 31, 2014].



Figure 16. H-Kayne and M-Snoop with Moroccan flag in "Maghreb 1 Machi 2" (2011)

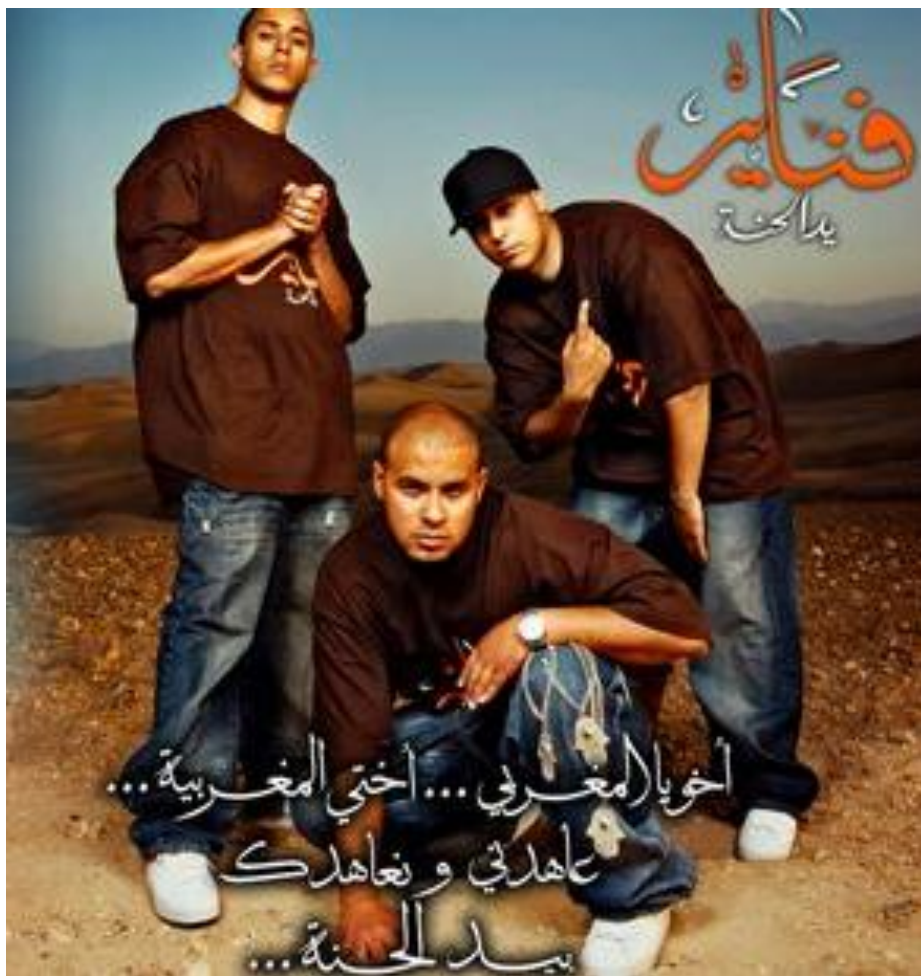


Figure 17. Cover of Album *Yed el Henna* (2007)



Figure 18. Video clip "A la Marocaine" (2011)

These rappers recreate the collective feeling of belonging to Morocco mediated by the flag and reinforced by the performative gesture “one.”¹²⁰ The sign is thus a performative reminder of a collective memory as imagined by the Makhzen. This symbol is also performed at the end of video clip “Maghreb 1 Machi 2” by popular Moroccan rappers and musicians, and has been part of the videos of the likes of Omar Sayyed, member of Nass El Ghiwane, Don Bigg, Oum, Muslim, and members from Casa Crew who appear in pictures making the same sign with their hands. Omar Sayyed and Muslim – whose musical production as earlier demonstrated denounces uncritical patriotism – featuring in “Maghreb 1 Machi 2” indicates that the Sahara conflict is a sensitive issue, and intimates that the majority of Moroccans believe the region falls within its national boundaries. The delicacy of the Sahara dispute in Morocco is manifested by the fact that any opinion that differs from the official narrative (that the Western Sahara is part of the country) is considered

¹²⁰ This gesture reminds of the index finger position performed by Muslims at the end of the prayer to claim the uniqueness of God.

crossing the ‘red lines’ (Vermeren 2004, p.140; San Martin 2007, p.581). In other words, questioning Morocco’s territorial right to the Sahara region is considered an attack on the nation’s unity. The ‘red lines’ construct the national enemy as a useful way to thwart any act of dissent. While rappers like Muslim are highly critical of the political system, the Makhzen’s narrative sees that Morocco has a right over the Sahara region.

The release date of “Maghreb 1 Machi 2” in February 2011 suggests that it was a patriotic response to attempts by the Sahara independence movement to divide the country, but also to contain the M20F pro-democracy movement. An article reproduced by the now defunct French newspaper *Le Post* on February 19, 2011,¹²¹ praises the song and the rapper M-Snoop, describing him as one of the artists most engaged in the national cause: “M-Snoop is one of these young artists [who has been] convinced to join the anti-revolution “front of patriots” that sings praises to the glory of the mother Nation and in honor of the King our Sir Mohammed VI of Morocco.” While Polisario is a traitor, the rappers that appear in the video clip “awake profound feelings of the Moroccan national unity” (*Le Post* on February 19, 2011). The fact that both this song “Maghreb 1 Machi 2” and this article were both released in February 2011 indicates a moment of tension in which the unity of Moroccan rappers in the territorial dispute of the Sahara serves the Makhzen to face the menace of the pro-democracy February 20 demonstrations that challenged the status-quo of the country.

¹²¹ This article was re-posted on “Last Night in Orient,” a blog that deals with Moroccan and Arabic music (<http://musique.arabe.over-blog.com/article-m-snoop-le-rap-marocain-a-la-rescousse-de-l-unite-nationale-marocaine-67570005.html> [Accessed February 19, 2014]).

In the weeks before the launch of the M20F amidst the 2011 demonstrations around the country, its supporters were subjected to a smear campaign carried out by government ministers and official media outlets (Bennani-Chraïbi & Jeghlaly 2012, p.877; Fernández Molina 2011, p.438). The Minister of Youth and Sports Moncef Belkhatyat declared that Polisario was behind the movement,¹²² thus connecting the M20F directly to the Western Sahara issue, and identifying the movement as a foreign seeking to split up Morocco. The campaign accused supporters of being atheists or Islamists; agents who sought to destroy the country's unity, members of the Polisario or Western Sahara separatists. The Makhzen media summarily portrayed the 20 February demonstrations' organizers as: "'Traitors' who question the foundations of the nation (God, the nation and the King), [as] 'marginalized' who transgress its values (converts to Christianity, 'atheists,' those who break the fast, 'homosexuals')." (Bennani-Chraïbi & Jeghlaly 2012, 878). How the Makhzen constructed the enemy of Morocco can thus be seen to coincide with the demonization of those who question the official narrative of the nation and transgress its 'red lines.'

An article in *TelQuel* (February 12, 2011, pp.19-25) connected the Sahara uprisings of 2010 and the February 20 demonstrations in an issue dedicated to Moroccan patriotism, and featured the song "Maghreb 1 Machi 2" and the issue of patriotic rap. As the magazine describes, in order to show pride in their country, youth appropriated national symbols, such as placing the image of the king in the center of their picture. This patriotism and the symbol of the king were precisely used by the *Touche Pas à Mon Roi* (Don't Touch My King) that emerged as a

¹²² <http://www.bladi.net/moncef-belkhatyat-polisario.html> [Accessed June 9, 2012].

counterattack to M20F. Placing the Mohammed VI at the center of the dispute reinforced the idea that the M20F aimed to destroy national unity and the king's legitimacy. M20F supporters did not want to get rid of the king. Their demands of the M20F, however, were political and socio-economic and included calls for better political and social rights, free education, better prices for basic products, and decent wages. The movement called for:

Profound and radical constitutional and political changes to consolidate a democratic state built on strong institutions; the construction of a state based on the rule of law and a free and independent legal system with the aim of endowing the country with a political parliamentary monarchy. (Férandez Molina 2011, pp.436–437)

These demands were confronted with accusations of being the enemies of the nation. These accusations were not a new strategy to contain opposition in Morocco. As a response, members of the M20F changed the original date for the demonstration to February 27, 2011 a date is connected to Polisario (Belghazi 2013, interview, March 18); since it was on February 27, 1976 that Polisario announced the independence of the Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic. The announcement was followed by armed struggle against Morocco and Mauritania, and remains a politically significant date (Daadaoui 2008, p.143; Storm 2007, p.39). To further thwart the attempted demonization of the movement, demonstration on February 20, 2011 and those that followed all made sure to include Moroccan flags to avoid allegations of being unpatriotic. As Younes Belghazi explained: “When they [M20F] were in a protest and there weren't flags of Morocco, this was a tool of propaganda to say ‘look, they are with no flag.’ So we needed to have a flag to say ‘we are Moroccans’” (2013, interview, March 18).

In spite of Belghazi's affirmation, the use of the flag by the M20F was minor when compared to other demonstrations such as the one in Casablanca that followed the events in Layoune in 2010. Reaction to the demonstration is found in an article in *TelQuel* (February 12, 2011, pp.19-25) and in a later article focused on the M20F entitled "Nous Y Sommes" (*TelQuel* March 26, 2011, pp.19-30). Despite supporters' efforts to emphasize the Moroccaness of the M20F, official propaganda affected even the article of a magazine like *TelQuel* seen as pushing socio-political boundaries (Orlando 2009, p.133). The articles on the demonstrations reflect a change in the magazine's editorial line that coincided with the departure of Ahmed Benchemsi as editor-in-chief and the outbreak of protests in North Africa in December 2010 (Gershovich 2013, p.105). *TelQuel*'s special issue on patriotism reflects the absence of a clear editorial line and fear of censorship at the time of contention between the M20F and the Makhzen. This article sides with the state in reinforcing patriots as those who follow the official narrative of the Makhzen. The first article (*TelQuel* February 12, 2011, pp.19-25) thus refers to the youth from *Touche Pas à Mon Roi* as 'patriots,' perpetuating the idea that patriotism in Morocco is conditional on abstention from any criticism or questioning of the status quo. As a further matter, the article makes prominent use of the Moroccan flag to illustrate its patriotic theme.

The emergence of the M20F brought again into focus the narrative of the Moroccan 'exception' (Bennani-Chraïbi & Jeghlaly 2012, p.880). For example, in an article of the *Diplomatic Courier* (November 11, 2011) titled "The Moroccan

Exception,”¹²³ former US Ambassador for Morocco Marc Ginsberg (1994-1998) argues that the king has been able to make out of Morocco an exception to the region unveiling “a remarkable and ingenious response to the attack” (referring to the 2003 Casablanca bombings). Ginsberg further claims that when the king was confronted with the M20F, “rather than retreat from the change called for by the February 20th Movement, he fully embraced it gaining even more legitimacy as an agent of change in his country.” Laila Lalami refuted Ginsberg’s argument in *The Nation* (September 12, 2011),¹²⁴ writing that the ‘exception’ narrative was been used to combat the power of the M20F. However, the fact that the M20F was allowed to get set up, organize and demonstrate, works to confirm the Moroccan ‘exception’ because, according to this narrative, Morocco has been able to distinguish itself as a democratic country, as opposed to its neighbors, where social movements are not repressed (Bennani-Chraïbi & Jeghlal 2012, p.880). The narrative of exceptionalism prompted in order to neutralize the threat of the M20F to the status quo, claims that Morocco was already undergoing democratic changes and therefore a movement like the M20F was unnecessary and redundant. The Matkich Bladi association reappeared at this time to aid the Makhzen in its campaign against the M20F supporters. Matkich Bladi called on their members to not demonstrate on February 20, saying that it considered the demonstration “an unacceptable mimicry with the events that are occurring in the Maghreb and Middle East.”¹²⁵ Matkich Bladi criticized organizers of the 20 February demonstrations, who had connected through social media (mainly Facebook), and asked supporters to gather in support of Tunisia

¹²³ <http://www.diplomaticourier.com/news/regions/middle-east/312-the-moroccan-exception> [Accessed February 25, 2014].

¹²⁴ <http://www.thenation.com/article/162967/moroccan-exception> [Accessed February 25, 2014].

¹²⁵ <http://www.bladi.net/matquich-bladi-marche-20-fevrier.html> [Accessed May 14, 2014].

and then Egypt. In their press release of February 18,¹²⁶ Matkich Bladi stated its support of the Tunisian and Egyptian youth in their demonstrations as part of the MENA uprisings taking place that year that lead to the falling of both countries' autocratic regimes. However, the press release also emphasized the Moroccan exception as Morocco is claimed to have embarked in the reforms 11 years before. As Matkich Bladi maintains, the Moroccan state has pursued: "Notably the creation of the Equity and Reconciliation Commission (IER), the overture of the public space to freedom of speech, the reform of the *Moudawwana*, the access to housing, the reinforcement of the institutions..."¹²⁷ For this reason, Matkich Bladi perceives sees the M20F as irrelevant to Morocco, since the group engages with the official narrative of change under the leadership of King Mohammed VI. Yet, Cavatorta and Dalmasso (2013, p.122) remind us that almost all countries from the MENA region have implemented liberal and democratic reforms in order to bestow on their nations a democratizing and liberal image. Nevertheless, the result is that the state remains in control of political power and unaccountable to ordinary citizens (Ibid).

As the Matkich Bladi, rapper Don Bigg produced the song "Mabghitch" (I Don't Want) (2011)¹²⁸ to directly attack the M20F. The song's video clip¹²⁹ replicates the accusations to M20F in the same terms as the Makhzen. Don Bigg accuses the M20F of being made up of fast-breakers, atheists and Islamists, portraying them as the *Hizb al Himar* (Party of Donkeys). In the song Don Bigg

¹²⁶ http://www.yabiladi.com/img/content/docs/Com-de-presse-touche-pas-a-mon-pays_18-02-2011.pdf [Accessed May 14, 2014].

¹²⁷ Ibid.

¹²⁸ <http://eplume.wordpress.com/2011/08/08/le-mouvement-du-20-fevrier-don-bigge-et-le-clap-de-fin/> [Accessed May 13, 2014].; <http://www.demainonline.com/2013/03/02/le-rappeur-don-bigge-tombe-le-masque/> [Accessed May 13, 2014].

¹²⁹ Chapter Two dwells on this song's use of urban spaces as a way to support the Makhzen's agenda.

asks, “Who will represent the people?”¹³⁰ The lyrics go on to explain that for him, the M20F are people who eat during Ramadan: “Is it these four boys who eat during Ramadan like it was a joke?”¹³¹ And, “a bunch of Islamists that use religion in a fake manner.”¹³² At the end of the clip, Bigg confirms his position at by re-enacting a scene representing the three pillars of the nation: God, the nation and the king (as analyzed in Chapter Two). In an interview during the 2013 national program “Mais encore?” (But Still) on 2M,¹³³ the host asked Don Bigg if his problem with the M20F was because he thought the group was attacking the country’s motto: “*Allah, El Watan, El Malik*.” Don Bigg answered that even if the threat posed by the movement was initially unclear, it eventually attested to be for everything but *Allah, El Watan, El Malik*. Don Bigg thus sided with Makhzen propaganda that posited the M20F as opposing the national pillars. The rapper’s political stance alongside the ruling elite was confirmed in the concert Don Bigg organized on September 11, 2011 in Casablanca. The concert ended with the national anthem and the flag of Morocco displayed on a large screen.¹³⁴ A video of this finale was released on February 21, 2014, only a day after the anniversary of the first demonstration in 2011, emphasizing his continuous aversion to the M20F and confirming his state-aligned agenda.

After the demonstrations, Hatim Bensalha from H-Kayne, in collaboration with another member of H-Kayne Sif Lssane,¹³⁵ and rapper Ridfabuleux released the

¹³⁰ “*chkoun li ghay mettal cha3b?*”

¹³¹ “*wach 4 dial l'brahech li wakline ramdan la3b?*”

¹³² “*wella rba3a dial l'aya kay rekbo 3la dine batel.*”

¹³³ http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ha9i5Bcx_EI [accessed October 27, 2013].

¹³⁴ <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fUIYXqNIC7Y> [Accessed February 21, 2014].

¹³⁵ Although this song is claimed as a solo for Hatim, Sif Lssane and Othman (both from H-Kayne) feature in the song and video clip as well. While Sif Lssane raps in the third verse, Othman participates in the video clip. Therefore, I include songs in which the rest of the group contributes to

song “A la Marocaine” (2011) to claim unity against the nation’s enemy. The song repeats the stereotypes of territorial unity, employing almost exclusively images in red and green all throughout the video clip. The lyrics of “A la Marocaine” further emphasize the stereotypes, repeating the title or lines such as “we are all the same, *à la marocaine*”¹³⁶ to reinforce the rappers aim of establishing a group united in national identity. The track “A la Marocaine” is further read as an “ego-trip” single, which denotes a style of writing where the rapper evidences his/her value either in terms of finance, sexuality, music, and so forth, and seeks to differentiate himself/herself from other rappers (Zegnani 2004, p.67; Gadet 2010, p.266). In the track, the Moroccan flag and the lyrics, do not prove their superiority as individuals, but as members of a nation; the ego-trip is no longer for the individual but for the national group. When I asked H-Kayne’s Hatim whom he was fighting against in his lyrics, he answered:

The fight, yes it’s a fight because, as I told you, it’s a fight against world rap. You know what I mean? We come to defend Moroccan’s rap. And because it’s very technical and very “rap,” we put a [boxing] ring because it’s a real combat, it’s Moroccan rap against the others. It’s not *à la marocaine* that we’re going to only say tea, couscous... it’s *à la marocaine* 2012. (Bensalha 2011, interview, July 2)¹³⁷

Through the ego-trip the rappers reinforce the idea of Moroccanness as entailing a consensus on who can belong to the nation: someone who can support, agree with,

the final production even though they are considered solos. Othman’s “Maghreb 1 Mach 2” is a similar case, where all the members of H-Kayne feature in the video clip.

¹³⁶ “*On est tous, les mêmes à la marocaine.*”

¹³⁷ “*Le fight, oui c’est un fight parce que comme je t’ai dit c’est un fight adressé au rap du monde. Tu voit c’est ce que je veux dire ? c’est que nous on vient défendre le rap des marocains. Et comme c’est assez technique et assez « rap », on a mis un ring parce que c’est un vrai combat, c’est le rap marocain contre les autres. C’est pas à la marocaine qu’on va dire du thé, du couscous... c’est à la marocain 2012.*”

and reproduce the official national motto: one god, one nation, one king (*Allah, El Watan, El Malik*). The video clip for the ego-tip song reproduces the same image of a boxing ring that the rapper brought up in the interview. In the video, the three rappers, Hatim, Othman and Ridfabuleux walk into the ring where a big Moroccan flag is displayed behind the rappers. Then, Hatim opens up his leather jacket revealing a red t-shirt with a small Moroccan flag on its upper left side. Ridfabuleux also has the Moroccan flag displayed on his clothes. The rappers appropriate the Moroccan flag to perpetuate the idea that there is one sole idea of the Moroccan nation. As Billig argues (Billig 1995, p.43), flags hung behind a performer serve to turn the background into the space of the homeland. In these video clips, the flag stands in the back, but also in the front forcing the audience to notice the flag and its meaning. The clip ends with the three rappers elevating their right arms and using their hands to point their index finger under the Moroccan flag [see Figure 18]. The national ego-trip is reinforced by the Moroccan flag and its colors, together with the gesture of unity, perpetuate uncritically the official national narrative and the power of the king.

The national colors are embedded in every shot of the clip of “A la Marocaine,” where red and green appear in t-shirts, caps and even the title of the song. The colors are even used in the lyrics when Hatim states: “You become red with anger, you’ll become green with rage,”¹³⁸ using the colors of the national flag to create a group of Moroccans and non-Moroccans, so that the flag is not just held in the hands of the rappers, or displayed in front of them as in the previous clip. In the video clip of “A la Marocaine” the flag is exhibited in its totality, but also

¹³⁸ “*Tu deviens rouge de colère, tu deviens vert de rage.*”

fragmented as part of the video title or in the colors of the audience and rappers garments as Figure 19 shows.



Figure 19. Title of the song "A la Marocaine" (2011)

This fragmentation of the flag is as powerful as the whole as it may be equally recognized as a symbol national of unity, for example when only the star is used (Shanafelt 2008, p.14). Hatim from the group H-Kayne employs the symbol of khamisa as part of his attack on other rappers, employing a common phrase in Morocco to protect himself from evil: “I give you a big *khamisa wkhamous* in your eyes.”¹³⁹ As “Yed el Henna” focuses on the unity of the country using the issue of the Sahara, the chorus uses the dispute over Ceuta and Melilla¹⁴⁰ to depict the sense of struggle over what is considered Moroccan territory:

¹³⁹ “*Je te lâche un gros khamssa w khmouss dans tes yeux.*”

¹⁴⁰ Ceuta and Melilla are two Spanish cities geographically located in the northern Moroccan coast. Although Morocco claims sovereign rights over both cities, these belong to Spain who asserts they are integral part of the Spanish territory (Howe 2005, p.314).

We hit the clubs *à la marocaine*/we are chaotic in shops *à la marocaine*/warn your friends that we have landed *à la marocaine*, hey *à la marocaine*, *à la marocaine*/The sound is heavy it's pure *à la marocaine*/we pass it around at full speed *à la marocaine*/Sahara, Ceuta and Melilla, *à la marocaine*, hey *à la marocaine*, *à la marocaine*.¹⁴¹

Hatim claims the country's unity by naming the Sahara, Ceuta and Melilla; however, he does this employing French instead of Darija. As Chapter Two suggests, French has a limited capacity to reach unprivileged Moroccan youth, and thus limited means to relate to this youth. The use of French in the song "A la Marocaine" is further evidence, together with the over-use of signifiers of the nation, of a lack of engagement with the Moroccan unprivileged youth's everyday lives with which this song does not relate.

Conclusion

This chapter suggests that rappers who include patriotic themes and signifiers in their songs and video clips are promoted by the Makhzen to serve the dominant agenda in times of crisis. The investment that this effort entailed eventually granted the work of rapper like H-Kayne and Fnaïre access to the public arena; including participating in the largest music festivals of the country, having radio stations broadcast their songs, and reaping the economic gains from each. By supporting these rappers and their production, the Makhzen promotes rap lyrics and video clips that contain no social or political criticism of the country. Any criticism deemed unacceptable for the Makhzen, moreover, is constructed as being a threat to Morocco. The 2003 terrorist

¹⁴¹ "On défouaille dans les boîtes à la marocaine/On fout le zbeul dans les boîtes à la marocaine/ Préviens tes potes qu'on débarque à la marocaine, hey à la marocaine, à la marocaine/Le son est lourd c'est de la pure à la marocaine/On fait nêtour a toute allure à la marocaine/Sahra Sebta w Melilia à la marocaine, hey à la marocaine, à la marocaine."

blasts and the 2011 uprisings determine that criticism of the ruling political and economic elites is constructed as part of a Polisario campaign or a militant Islamist threat targeting the Moroccan nation. Fnaïre and H-Kayne conjure the nation with words of goodness and kindness, depicting an ideal nation that enemies are trying to destroy. The patriotic narrative has also proved commercially beneficial to such an extent that it increases the sale of products such as mobile phones. Rappers like Fnaïre or H-Kayne thus deliberately maintain this discourse in their rap songs masked with love of the nation and reenacted through national symbols: the flag, the king, and the hand to indicate unity. This is not the case with all Moroccan rappers, however. Muslim and Mobydick have directly questioned these patriotic themes. These and other rappers and artists like Reda Allali singer of the group Hoba Hoba Spirit help reinforce this criticism by mocking the work of Fnaïre and H-Kayne. Despite the Makhzen's powerful role as main patron of culture and the notoriety that Fnaïre and H-Kayne gather thanks to the Makhzen's support, other rappers have carved out a space for dissent.

The interplay between rappers who support the state narrative and those who oppose it is further problematized in the following chapter as the dichotomy is not as clear-cut as it may appear. Chapter Four pick up the idea here introduced whereby the Makhzen supports or support the creation of civil society associations, such as Matkich Bladi, in order to divide opposition mainly formed by two groups: the secular civil society and political Islam groups. It argues that some members of the secular civil society overlook voices of dissent such as rapper Muslim because they consider him an 'Islamist.' Though Muslim's work, as Chapter Three has corroborated, is embedded with a resistant discourse, his narrative does not fulfill the

description of 'progress' pushed forwards by some secular groups in Morocco. These divisions in the opposition ultimately benefit the Makhzen to silence rappers that are a powerful tool of dissent among Moroccan youth.

Chapter Four: Framing Voices of Dissent

Dissent may be defined as those voices that criticize existing authority (Shiffrin 1998, p.xi; Austin 2005, p.1). In the MENA region, Francesco Cavatorta (2006, p.208) argues, civil society is considered as a powerful voice of opposition due to the weakness and discredit of political parties. However, a strong civil society does not necessarily encourage democratization as it allows the state to divide opposition deciding which associations to favor and thus controlling the political agenda (Ibid). In Morocco, the narrative of dissent, ‘progress’ and democracy has been constructed by groups within the civil society that disregard Islamist associations as undemocratic and ‘uncivil’ due to their Islamic ethos (Ibid, p.209). These secular groups, with the support of the international community, shape dissent as a reflection of European liberal secularism (Cavatorta 2009, p.145). Catherine Miller (2012, pp.171–172) exemplifies this trend when she refers to these secular groups as the “progressive wing” of Moroccan society bestowing them with the custody of being the ones in Morocco to call for cultural diversity and plurality. Although Miller argues that this wing is not limited to the French-speaking elite, she explicitly mentions the Moroccan French language magazine *TelQuel* as the symbol of this ‘progressive’ agenda. In this respect, Hamid Dabashi denounces that Western Europe and North America construct voices of dissent as the story told by well-educated and sophisticated native informants, meaning non-European and non-American who tell “not what they [Western Europe and North America] need to know but what they want to hear” (2011, p.16). This chapter argues that there is a tendency to frame dissent according to the dispositions of European secularism and to disregard other voices as valid examples of opposition when they do not fit in this frame.

Considering Cavatorta and Dabashi's insight on the topic, this frame encourages selected voices of dissent to become an ornament to legitimate power in affirming the image of a liberal and plural country without having a real chance at social and political change (Gusterson 2005, p.104). As the first section of the previous chapter argued, in Morocco the Makhzen often supports civil society groups to portray an image of liberal society with free association while at the same time promoting its agenda and quelling dissent (Cavatorta & Dalmasso 2013, p.122). The Makhzen has also managed to divide opposition groups, keeping the secular and liberal social movements, separate from Islamist groups such as the PJD (Party of Justice and Development) or the Justice and Charity group (Cavatorta 2009, p.141). Using the work of Francesco Cavatorta (2006; 2007; 2009; 2013), this chapter challenges the secular perception of opposition to argue that voices of dissent are those who oppose hegemonic social and political narratives, but at the same time remain independent from other political agendas.

These groups of the secular civil society usually led by the privileged French educated elite have difficulties relating to the majority of the Moroccan population due to educational and socioeconomic gaps (Smith & Loudiy 2005, p.1096; Cavatorta 2009, p.148). Therefore, this chapter pick up from Chapter Two's argument on the use of language in Moroccan rap to argue that a rapper like Muslim is able to better relate to the suffering of urban unprivileged youth and hence become a relevant voice of dissent. However, it also builds on Chapter Three to raise the claim that sectors of secular civil society have supported rap to construct a discourse of cultural dissent opposing political Islam, but at the same time remains in tune with the Makhzen agenda. The first section examines how the secular agenda has been

culturally framed by the idea of the *Nayda* (stand up, wake up) movement, which references the rise of new artistic voices including rappers promoted by Moroccan French language newspapers like *Libération*, magazines such as *L'Express International*, *Actuel*, *Le Soirs-echos*, and *TelQuel*, or news websites like Yabladi.com or Bladi.net. However, rappers and cultural actors challenge the *Nayda* narrative, considering it to be an over-romanticized narrative imposed by some media. The second section of this chapter takes as its focus the national and international media and its focus on rapper L7a9ed (the enraged, outraged, or vindictive), who was harshly penalized by the state. The case of L7a9ed shows that national and international media has constructed cultural resistance by privileging social and political actions over music production. The third section then goes on to argue that sectors of the secular groups have concealed voices of dissent, since these voices are seen as connected to political Islam. The section will present the case of Muslim, who is highly critical of the Makhzen's abuse of power, and its oppression of the people. However, Muslim has been disregarded as a valid voice of dissent by sectors of secular civil society for his allegedly religious conservative narrative. The fourth section demystifies the relationship between dissent and secularism, arguing that voices of dissent are compatible with religiosity and a conservative Islamic¹ narrative as in the case of rapper Muslim. Through his narrative, Muslim voices the anger and despair of urban unprivileged youth affected by the neoliberal economic politics adopted in Morocco since the 1980s. Ultimately, Muslim's narrative of dissent attests that when discourses on the nation divert from patriotic themes, the

¹ As further explained later in this chapter, I distinguish between Islamic, as relative to Islam, and Islamist, considered as a kind of political militancy.

deep socio-economic rupture in the Moroccan society obscures the myth of the national unity.

1. Rap and The *Nayda* Narrative

Changes in the Moroccan cultural field that occurred following the accession of King Mohammed VI to power in 1999 were labeled as *Nayda* on the cover of the Moroccan Francophone weekly magazine *TelQuel* (June 10, 2006).² The term *Nayda* comes from Moroccan Darija and means ‘stand up’ or ‘wake up,’ and has been taken by the artistic movement as a call to free Moroccan youth of oppression: “In Morocco, the Nayda Movement translates [as the idea of] a libertarian [and] artistic revival, [that is] plural, [and] independent, [and that] works against conservatism. A breath of fresh air for Moroccan youth.”³ One *TelQuel* (June 10, 2006) issue frames *Nayda* in similar terms, as a movement focused on language and the emergence of new artists in the public sphere: “Through the real talk authorized by Darija and the hymn to creativity that these underground talents bring, another Morocco is born.” The documentary *Casanayda* (2007), directed by Farida Belyazid and written by Dominique Caubet filmed in Morocco, uses the term to reflect on the new generation of artists. The documentary focuses on artists’ occupation of spaces for self-expression and suggests that the emergence of new musical genres like rap and heavy metal have revolutionized Morocco’s youth since the start of the new century.

The term has also been used in the song “Issawa Style” (2006) by H-Kayne and called one of the blueprints for the Moroccan hip hop scene. The song’s chorus repeats the lyrics: “All Moroccans! H-Kayne brings the catchy Issawi rhythm, get up,

² http://m.telquel-online.com/archives/229/couverture_229_1.shtml [Accessed April 28, 2014].

³ <http://www.africultures.com/php/?nav=article&no=8772> [Accessed April 28, 2014].

wake up, let's go crazy!"⁴ On the surface, the term "nayda" is used here to invite the audience to stand up and move; however, H-Kayne uses the action as a leitmotif in their lyrics to set Moroccans in motion, to make them think and react. Another rapper from the group, Othman, builds on the idea and sings, "Melody and style, crazy, start to move, don't stay sitting down. Shut up and try to understand properly"⁵ in the track "Kima Dima"⁶ (As Usual) (2006). Other rappers like Don Bigg in "Mgharba Tal Mout"⁷ (Moroccans Until Death) (2006) at the end of this song: "*New style new shit/100% Moroccan music/the beat is over there and rap is over here, and wake up!*"⁸ The term as such is used in the young Moroccans daily life, as well as in some rap songs, however, not linked to this particular narrative but meaning "turn up" as used by the Anglophone youth.

Researchers such as Fatma Aït Mous (2008, p.299) and Dominique Caubet in her documentary film *Casanayda* (2007), as well as by the magazine *TelQuel* (June 10, 2006) and rapper Mobydick relate Nayda with the booming of music festivals and rap music by 2006.⁹ Though Mobydick does not employ the word Nayda, the rapper sets 2006 as an important year in Moroccan rap, saying that it marked a turning point in the quality of the production:

2006 was when everything started, before then there were some tapes, some demos, but they weren't very interesting. Then in 2006 a few albums were released, from Bigg and H-Kayne. As you can see, we're talking whole albums, not just singles or just one group

⁴ "lkoula mgharba, h-kayne bitem issawi jadba, raha nayda nouda, nhablouha nouda."

⁵ "nagma o style, 7ma9 hbile, bda tharak, matab9ach galas, skot fham mazyen."

⁶ http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=V2O-e20_Qso [Accessed May 19, 2014].

⁷ <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4MHTBkEpos8> [Accessed March 12, 2014].

⁸ "New style new shit/Moussi9a 100% Maghribiya/Lbeat men lhih w rap men hna, w nayda!"

⁹ Chapters Two and Three argue the connection between the blooming of music festivals in Morocco, mainly controlled by the Makhzen and the participation of rappers supported by the Makhzen such as H-Kayne, Fnaïre or Don Bigg, specially later on in his career. Nevertheless, concerts were organized previous to 2003, for example, the FOL organized events for rappers since the late 1990s.

that puts out one single every three years, it wasn't a big thing if you know what I mean. It was that way before 2006, just a few singles on the net or RapTV. (Mobydick 2013, interview, July 5)¹⁰

Mobydick's insight follows the timeline of the *Nayda*, the same one that *TelQuel* or the movie *Casanayda* (2007) had also set out. Mobydick considers the first generation of artists to have found themselves promoted and called to perform in music festivals without having a substantial music production:

What happened was that the politics in Morocco made it so the artists were pushed forward with no reason, we didn't have the level [of experience], we didn't have anything to contribute with. But, because the political agenda claimed rappers, and we were well paid, we found ourselves [...] with a microphone; you know what I mean? We didn't have a career [before]. (Mobydick 2013, interview, July 5)¹¹

According to Mobydick, the media and music festivals called on rappers to feature in their programs without the artists having a developed or solid music career. That said, this was also the case for himself: "I had the experience of going on a huge stage, with thousands of people in front of me, while all I'd really done was a single" (Ibid).¹² The case of Mobydick, who gained fame after winning the *Tremplin du Boulevard* in 2006, parallels the experiences of H-Kayne and Casa Crew. As Hatim Bensalha (2011, interview, July 2) from H-Kayne told me, when they won the

¹⁰ "2006 c'est l'année où tout le monde a commencé, avant 2006 y avait on va dire que de petits tests, des petites maquettes, c'était pas très, très, très intéressant. 2006 il y a eu des sorties d'albums comme celui de Bigg, comme celui de H-Kayne, donc c'était déjà, quand on parle d'album c'est pas la même chose, c'est pas comme parler d'un seul single, d'un seul groupe qui sort genre, un single tous les trois ans, c'est pas une grande référence, tu vois ce que je veux dire? C'était ça ce qui se passait avant 2006, que des petit singles sur des sites Internet comme RapTV et tout ça, voilà."

¹¹ "Ce qu'il s'est passé est que la politique au Maroc a fait que nous les artistes on a été juste poussé en avant sans aucune raison, on n'a pas le niveau, on a rien à apporter. Mais, parce que la politique réclame des rappers, et on était bien payé que on s'est retrouvé comme ça avec un micro, tout vois ? On n'as pas un parcours."

¹² "Moi j'ai eu l'expérience de monter sur une scène, immense, avec des milliers des gens devant moi, alors que dans mon bagage il y a juste un single."

Tremplin in 2003, they had not applied to participate. Rather, they were called on to participate in the contest; they went, performed and won. In terms of the rap movement, the *Boulevard* festival and the artists it promoted is central to the Nayda narrative as it is considered as the only big ‘independent’ festival and hence couples well with the secular civil society’s agenda. Despite the account that rap took off via official sponsorship, rap albums were released as early as the 1990s for example the albums *Wakie* (Reality) (1996) and *M3ak Dima M3ak* (With You, Always With You) (1998) by the group Double A or the album *Tanjawa Daba* (From Tangiers Now) (2001) by Muslim with his former group Zan9a Flow. Mobydick’s insight points out that the Moroccan rap scene took off when media and Internet advertised their productions, thus providing rappers with access to a larger Moroccan public sphere and a larger national audience.

The media’s recognition of Moroccan hip hop shaped rappers as young rebels through association with the Spanish ‘Movida’ (Caubet 2005, p.233; Bahmad 2013, p.20; Aït Mous & Wazif 2008, p.297). The term ‘Moroccan Movida’ was borrowed from the *Movida Madrileña*. This cultural movement, which emerged in Spain after the death of Franco (1975) and the transformation of the Spanish constitution (1978), resulted in groups of people gathering in Madrid wishing to express themselves freely through different art forms. The name has since been abandoned because Morocco has not experienced a swift towards democracy in this period and it is therefore unlike Spain in this regard. However, the association with the Spanish Movida suggests a rather superficial comparison between Spanish transition to democracy and Morocco’s change of king based on the work of a group of artists and bolsters the Makhzen’s narrative of exceptionalism. Viewing artists as heroes and

rebellious youth as opposed to co-opted state agents is brought up in the work of scholars like Aomar Boum (2013) or Ben-Layashi (2013) who homogenize and categorize rappers as a uniform group of “new rebels” (Boum 2013, p.174) or “revolutionaries and ‘anarchists’ hip-hop youngsters” (Ben-Layashi 2013, p.151). Zakia Salime’s article “Rapping the Revolution” perpetuates this romanticized perception of Nayda claiming, “Nayda is now widely celebrated as an urban youth protest movement” (*Muftah* May 28, 2011).¹³ Moreover, it emphasize the idea that Nayda is exclusively a ‘protest’ movement while some of its members such as H-Kayne, Fnaïre or Don Bigg, as Chapter Three claimed, have not produced ‘protest’ music.

Though these scholars consider Nayda a social and –some argue for a politicized– movement of artists, when I asked Casa Crew member Masta Flow about Nayda he answered, “I have never understood exactly what that means” (2011, interview, November 2).¹⁴ As the rapper further explained in our interview, according to him, youth in Morocco associate the term with partying and dancing, not with a politicized movement. Although Don Bigg states that “there has never been Nayda here” (*TelQuel* June 7, 2012),¹⁵ he has also claimed that Nayda is a word used to label hip hop and everything made by youth in contemporary Morocco pointing out at the superficiality of the concept.¹⁶ Hicham Bahou, one of the founders of the music festival *L’Boulevard*, claims that it is the journalists who constructed the idea: “[Nayda] is made up by journalists. They have invented Nayda. We never

¹³ <http://muftah.org/rapping-the-revolution/> [Accessed March 4, 2014].

¹⁴ “*J’avais compris jamais exactement ce que ça signifie.*”

¹⁵ http://telquel.ma/2012/07/11/Mag-Don-Bigg-Hip-hop-Tal-Mout_528_3338 [Accessed July 23, 2014]. It must be noted that *Telquel*’s webpage wrongly dates this article as written on July 11, 2012.

¹⁶ http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3_sm29N6laQ [Accessed March 4, 2014].

spoke about a movement or anything similar.”¹⁷ The instrumentalization of Nayda by documentaries and books –as Hicham Bahou points out – suggests a trendy and over-romanticized perception of the term: “In what has already been done, there are some interesting things, however it is often romanticized, and commercialized. The concept of Nayda is more related to a fad, but it is more than that” (*TelQuel* May 22, 2010).¹⁸ Hicham Bahou went on to lament the lack of in-depth analysis in dealing with Nayda in Farida Belyazid and Dominique Caubet’s documentary *Casanayda* (2007): “It’s a very good thing. But I think it lacks in depth. It remains a superficial approach.”¹⁹ This narrative, however, that uniformly shapes rappers as tools for rebellion is promoted by some secular groups to show voices of dissent against the Makhzen.

However, this idea of dissent that includes a call for ‘progress,’ ‘openness,’ and ‘modernity’ is as much one of secular civil society as of the Makhzen itself. William Zartman’s article “Opposition as Support for the State” (1990) argues that in authoritative regimes such as Morocco, Algeria, and Egypt, the opposition plays a strategic role to perpetuate the regime: “Morocco is a political system in which initiatives come from the opposition but are enacted by the government in order to undercut the opposition’s appeal” (Zartman 1990, p.229). The Makhzen co-opts its opposition in order to remain powerful. As Combs-Schilling argues, in Morocco “diversity, ruptures and multiplicity are part of dominance itself” (1999, p.187). As the symbol of national unity, the king of Morocco has used political pluralism as a tool to divide the diverse political parties (Hammoudi 1997; Maghraoui 2011). Just

¹⁷ <http://metropolis.ma/?p=254> [Accessed April 9, 2014].

¹⁸ http://otvpbz.telquel-online.com/archives/425/interrogatoire_425.shtml [Accessed March 4, 2014].

¹⁹ Ibid.

as other rulers of the MENA region, the monarchy in Morocco distances itself from political parties leaving space for dissonant politics (Brumberg 2002, p.61).²⁰ The Makhzen employs a strategy of containment whereby certain controlled opposition or dissidence is allowed (Langlois 2009, p.212; Boukhars 2011, p.3; Errihani 2013, p.59). In the case of Nayda, a romantic perception bred by groups within secular civil society aids the Makhzen in claiming an ‘openness’ for the monarchy, which is in line with their official narrative of the Moroccan ‘exception.’ In this manner, the Makhzen is able to control dissent and appropriate these groups’ strategies.

The Makhzen has proved efficient in its aim to divide and conquer/rule the opposition movements against each other (Cavatorta 2007, p.188). Instead of using methods of coercion, the Makhzen has chosen co-optation and selective rewards used to consolidate authoritarian rule (Ibid). The tactic means that the opposition remains divided and the Makhzen continues its rule. The following section presents the case of rapper L7a9ed and looks at the role of some groups within the secular civil society and some international media outlets in shaping the rap scene through political activism with no regard for the rapper’s artistic skills or the ramifications for such promotion within the scene. This section argues that the construction of the Moroccan rap scene through the lenses of Nayda means that rappers are seen according to their social and political actions and not to their cultural production in its ability to reach and relate to Moroccan youth, specially the urban poor.

²⁰ Since Independence in 1956, the monarchy has been able to remain independent from political parties. After Hassan II succeeded his father in 1961, he declared in a press conference that the king should stay above political parties (Hammoudi 1997, p.20).

2. 'Resistance' in Context

The MENA uprisings of 2011 and –particularly in Morocco– the February 20 demonstrations with its subsequent formation of the 20 February Movement (M20F) shed light on the Makhzen's strategy of containment.²¹ The protests also revealed the role of the media as a significant player in framing dissent within youth and the rap scene, in particular their emphasis on their political activism –or lack thereof. This section argues that some sectors of the media portray a simplistic version of dissent by presenting rappers as totally co-opted or rebellious regardless of any acts of cultural resistance embedded in their work. In particular, this section suggests that that some–national and international media as well as some secular groups capitalize on rappers as symbols of dissent without analyzing their music production in depth. Looking at the work of rapper Mouad Belghouat aka L7a9ed and the song for which he was imprisoned, analysis will suggest that the media attention on L7a9ed and the Makhzen's condemnation of the artist are not related to his songs but to his political affiliation with the pro-democracy movement M20F.

Though many rappers in Morocco use music to criticize the country's social and political context, L7a9ed linked the M20F has done the same but been imprisoned for it. The period of social unrest in Morocco in the first months of 2011 included weekly demonstrations throughout the country and the formation of the M20F movement, only diminishing after the referendum for the new constitution in July 1, 2011 (Bennani-Chraïbi & Jeghlly 2012, p.890) since the main demand of the M20F had been constitutional reforms (Férnandez Molina 2011, p.436; Bennani-Chraïbi & Jeghlly 2012, p.878). However, the changes brought about by the new

²¹ See Chapter Three section four, "Serving Power: Fighting The Makhzen's Enemy."

constitution in July 2011 remained cosmetic and did not in fact meet the demands of M20F (F ernandez Molina 2011, p.441).²² Rapper L7a9ed was detained on September 9, 2011 and imprisoned for four months on the accusation of attacking an organizer of an anti-M20F group, the young royalist Mohamed Dali (*TelQuel* January 21, 2012; *Jeune Afrique* May 18, 2012).²³ L7a9ed was arrested again on May 11, 2012, this time accused of using images considered offensive that represent the police as donkeys in a YouTube video with L7a9ed and rapper Proof 3askri’s song “Klab Dawla”²⁴ (Dogs of the State) (2010). The video has since then been deleted (*The Guardian* April 17, 2012).²⁵

In the track “Klab Dawla,” L7a9ed and Proof 3askri denounce police abuses with a special focus on those affected by random selection. The song refers to the police as *klab* (dogs), which is at once an insult used to vent frustration, and at the same time an act of empowerment over the abuse of power by the police. “Klab Dawla” reenacts a regular case of harassment suffered by Moroccan unprivileged youth. The first part of the song is performed by L7a9ed, and sees the rapper play out an everyday situation that highlights the police and their violence against youth. Although he is harassed for smoking a hashish cigarette, L7a9ed said he considers his own criticism of the authorities as equally problematic: “[you arrest me] because

²² The development of the new text was characterized unclear proceedings and limited timeframe (over three months) with last minute modifications introduced by the royal adviser Mohamed Moatassim (F ernandez Molina 2011, p.439).

²³ http://telquel.ma/2012/02/22/mouad-l7a9ed-libre-lautre-notre-maroc-gagne_419 [Accessed July 23, 2014]; http://www.jeuneafrique.com/Article/ARTJAWEB20120518115526/?utm_source=feedburner&utm_medium=twitter&utm_campaign=Feed%3A+jeune_afrique_Politique+%28Jeune+Afrique+Politique%29 [Accessed March 5, 2014]; <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-15877251> [Accessed March 5, 2014].

²⁴ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EAYZ7R5xmvk> [Accessed March 5, 2014].

²⁵ <http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/2012/apr/17/el-haqed-morocco-hip-hop-revolutionary> [Accessed March 5, 2014]; <http://www.france24.com/fr/20120425-justice-maroc-rappeur-mouad-belghouat-rancune-liberte-expression-mouvement-20-fevrier> [Accessed March 5, 2014].

I criticize you?”²⁶ In the lyrics L7a9ed refers to his criticism of the Moroccan police and in particular their high-levels of corruption, an experience shared throughout the Arab world (Smolin 2010, p.82). The belief in a corrupted police is expressed in the following lines in “Klab Dawla:” “And you better give the big chief a big load of money; Or I will make changes on your life and exile you to Figuig²⁷/With poor people’s money you drive the police van.”²⁸ As Jonathan Smolin (2013, p.2) argues, it is through police corruption, violence, and abuse that people experience the authoritarian nature of the state. At the same time, corruption also highlights social and economic disparities. The money the police collect, as L7a9ed argues in “Klab Dawla,” is to be shared with the “big heads that have already powerful money.”²⁹ The corrupted officials are identified with the political class of the city of Fez, prominent leaders of the nationalist movement and considered the core of today’s social ruling elites (Hachimi 2007, p.97; Pargeter 2009, p.1034), as the lyrics of the song repeat: “Go and arrest people from Fez who divided the country Mr. Policeman.”³⁰ Despite the fact that the political and economic power in Morocco is not limited to elite Fessi families, the general perception is that they are the nucleus of the Makhzen with control over power and privilege (Pargeter 2009, p.1035). Reference to Fessi families is not unique to L7a9ed, but is in fact a trope employed by other rappers like Mobydick or Dizzy DROS to represent the power disparities in Morocco (See Chapter Five section two).

²⁶ “*W yakma l9itiny kancritiky.*”

²⁷ Figuig is a town near the Atlas Mountains on the border with Algeria and far away from the Rabat-Casablanca axis, that is, the country’s political and economical nucleus.

²⁸ “*W yakma gallek chef lkbir sir jib chi masso kbir wlla ghadi ndir 3lik taghyir nsayftek lFiguig; b flouss nass lemzalit, kat circuliw fo9 stafet.*”

²⁹ “*ryoss lekbar s7ab l3a9a s7i7a.*”

³⁰ “*Sir chedd fassa li 9esmo lblad assi lboulissi.*”

The power of the police over the poor is further performed in the verses of rapper Proof 3askri. The rapper performs a conversation between him and the police:

Police: What are you doing here? Ok, let's get started, do you have hashish, money, or pills?

Proof 3askri: I don't have anything chief don't frisk me! Stay where you're at, don't come near.

P: You're playing brave, little one, what the fuck do you want?

3: It's either I spend the night home, or I'll kick you.

P: Do you know who you're talking to little one? It's just one word in the talky-walky and we going to take you and kick you.

3: I know who I'm talking to: to a thief harasser. In the name of people I say everything I have in my heart about you, unbelievers.³¹

Rapper 3askri accuses the police of being *kufar* (unbelievers) as their behavior as thieves and abusers do not conform to the precepts of Islam. With a name that means "soldier," 3askri signals rappers' ability to fight power through words, positioning hip hop culture as "cultural warfare" (Alim 2006, p.10). Members of the hip hop community refer to themselves as "soldiers" –written *souljah* in the US hip hop scene– fighting power, for example in the US rapper Sista Souljah and in Morocco Muslim's album *Strictly for My Souljaz* (2005). In "Klab Dawla," L7a9ed and 3askri claim their right to denounce the abuse of power by the security services, and thus claim their right to defend the rights of the unprivileged sectors of Moroccan society. Like many rappers in Morocco, L7a9ed identifies with the poor and expresses his

³¹ "Ach kaddir hna yallah nbdaw f lmoufid; Wach 3andek 7chich flouss wla fanid?/ Ma3andi walo a chef bla ma tfayiny; Ghir f blastek w9af bla ma t7adiny/Katkharrej 3aynik albarhouch ach baghy Immok?/ We7da men jouj ya nbat f darna wla n9asmek/ Wach 3arf rassek m3amen kaddwi hadak lba3louk? Ghi kelma we7da f talky ndakhlouk w nsalkhouk/ 3arf rassi m3amen kandwi, m3a 7eggar cheffar/Bism cha3b li f klbi nkhwi 3likom alkuffar."

hope for that the police force will change: “And I hope one day you treat me like a free Moroccan/don’t oppress me/don’t despise me in the name of police to fool me with your rank/I’m L7a9ed the son of the poor/not the son of the commander.”³² The song “Klab Dawla,” therefore, serves rappers L7a9ed and 3askri to stage the oppression to which the country’s unprivileged youth is subdued in their day-to-day lives.

Expressing hate towards the brutal methods used by police is a recurrent theme in the Moroccan rap scene, just like in the American scene when as early as 1988 the crew N.W.A sang “Fuck Tha Police”³³ portraying the tension between the youth and the police in Los Angeles. In France, rapper Hamé of La Rumeur was sued by the ministry of interior for the group’s anti-police lyrics (Aidi 2014, p.xxvii). The expression of hate towards the police in Moroccan rap lyrics, which is shaped by the institution’s corruption, is also one of the main social and political injustices in the country. Though taboo during most of Hassan II rule, Smolin’s book *Moroccan Noir* (2013) argues that since the 1990s criticism of the police was no longer prohibited. Rapper Chaht Man from Casa Crew also calls the police thieves in the song “Attawri”³⁴ (The Revolutionary) (2010): “Police are looking the whole day for someone to rob.”³⁵ In the track “Machi Ana Likhtart”³⁶ (I’m Not The One Who Had Chosen) (2009), rapper Muslim describes the harshness of street life and dismisses the help police are supposed to give citizens: “And the police? Like if they are at our

³² “*W kantmenna chi nhar t3amelni ka Maghriby 7or/Machi te9ma3ni tkharrej fiya 3aynik/bmsiyt lpolice te7ta9erni/tel3ab 3lia b douk lgrayd/L7a9ed weld lpovry, machi weld l9ayd.*”

³³ From the album *Straight Outta Compton*, produced by Dr. Dree and DJ Yella, Ruthless Records, 1988.

³⁴ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zCUc0TSsf1k> [Accessed March 6, 2012].

³⁵ “*Boulissi y9alleb sba7 w 3chiya baghi 3lach yhref.*”

³⁶ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gKPpgarvx10> [Accessed April 10, 2014].

service!”³⁷ While the police are used as signifiers of power by rappers to express their anger at oppression of the masses, mainstream rappers also denounce the brutality and violence with which the Moroccan police treat the population which indicates that the police, as well as other institutions, absorbs criticisms otherwise directed at the monarchy.

Rappers championed by the Makhzen, like Don Bigg and H-Kayne, have written songs condemning police oppression. For example, Don Bigg’s video clip of the track “Mabghitch”³⁸ (2011) (I Don’t Want To) shows a wall bearing the message “Fuck the police,” and the rapper was never arrested [Figure 20].



Figure 20. Snapshot of video clip "Mabghitch" (2011)

³⁷ “*Wlbouliss? za3ma service!*”

³⁸ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D3GMgKehhk0> [Accessed April 10, 2014].

Don Bigg, but also H-Kayne, have dedicated whole tracks to this topic of the police: the track “Bouliss”³⁹ (Police) from Don Bigg’s album *Byad ou K7al* (White and Black) (2009) and “La Brigade”⁴⁰ (The Brigade) included on H-Kayne’s album *HKaynology* (2009). Both songs condemn police abuse of power and corruption much as L7a9ed did in his song “Klab Dawla.” The track “Bouliss” directly attacks the tendency of the police to abuse the weakest members of society: “Fake police, they only go after whom they want, they only go after whom they want, without shame.”⁴¹ While the police target the poorest they respect only rich people: “If you have a small car they will bother you/But if you have a big car they will salute you.”⁴² This idea is directly addressed when the rappers sing: “The police is at the service of rich people.”⁴³ Just as L7a9ed, Don Bigg also shows police employing unlawful tactics to get money, thus revealing police corruption: “Oh crossing with red lights costs you seventy/but if you have fifty we can work it out.”⁴⁴ The police as an institution highlight the gap in society between the privileges of the rich and the hard life of the poor. The social privileges of the rich elite are reproduced in the verse sung by rapper Azzedine’s in H-Kayne’s song: “If there’s no money, I can’t find you a space in the front/Or you can check if your family can do something before they get you in for 48 hours.”⁴⁵ Playing the role of the police, Azzedine highlights the corrupted police whose language is shaped in terms of money and social inequities favoring elites.

³⁹ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=d3f-Ns0wqM0> [Accessed March 6, 2014].

⁴⁰ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cUT2w1vARfc> [Accessed March 6, 2014].

⁴¹ “Bouliss khalaliss falso wella kychedd chkoun li bgha/wella kychedd chkoun li bgha; bla 7ya bla 7echma.”

⁴² “3andek tomobila seghira ghady ydiro lik seda3/Wila tomobila kabira ghady ydarebo lik salam”

⁴³ “Acchurta f khedma lemela3e9in.”

⁴⁴ “Oh rak heragueti do be sebe3ine, Oh ila 3andek khamsine ne9adero netefahemo.”

⁴⁵ “La kayn lbinga nchouf lk bach lakyn chi myat mitro wla chouf darkom houma yfekkro 9bel may3ammro bik lkrou 48 sa3a ki lkelb mayt.”

Despite these criticisms, H-Kayne's song "La Brigade" attributes police attitude to a few bad cop's actions: "We all know one fish can make the whole bag smell bad."⁴⁶ This is also reflected in a line sung by another H-Kayne member Sif Lssane where he claims: "There are those doing their work good and there are those with dead hearts."⁴⁷ Othman, however, continues by victimizing the police and claiming that they act the way they do because of their difficult working conditions: "Low salary, less work, people get angry. Why don't you give them more rights so they work properly."⁴⁸ The police's responsibilities are turned around when rapper Hatim claims that it is only when they act "*hors la loi*" (outside of the law) that he has had problems with the police. In this statement, the rapper neglects the Lead Years, a period from 1970s to 1990s known for profound violation of human rights (Bennani-Chraïbi & Jeghlal 2012, p.871; Smolin 2010, p.82), showing a lack of empathy and solidarity for all those who suffered under King Hassan II rule. Furthermore, the critique in the chorus remains moderate due to the fact that the singers explicitly express their respect for the police unless they act wrongly:

The brigade is around/the police car is collecting people/What's the name of your father/
what's the name of your mother/where do you live/where do you work? Slap, slap!/Your
eye is going to drop tears/[*French*] I got nothing against the police except when they are
above the law.⁴⁹

While the chorus confirms the idea that Moroccan police are violent, H-Kayne moderates its criticism to avoid retaliation from the police or the state. Don Bigg's

⁴⁶ "3arfine 7outa we7da tkhannez lina chwari."

⁴⁷ "Kayn li chad serbiss mzyane w kayn li 3andou l9alb mayt."

⁴⁸ "Khelssa na9ssa khedma na9ssa bnadem ka3i fel wachma. Lach ma tzidohom fin 7a9hom ydirou khedmethom yakma."

⁴⁹ "La brigade raha kaddor staphét kheddama tebla3/Smiyt bak smiyt mmok fin saken w fin kheddama/Ma9 marmella9 serfa9, 3aynik ghadi tedma3/J'ai rien contre la police sauf quand elle devient hors la loi."

song “Bouliss” uses the same understanding of the police, expressing his discontent for bad officers: “the bad cops in the police got us very sick.”⁵⁰ Don Bigg holds people responsible for police brutality because they have refused to follow the rules: “Yo! Morocco, behave with your police so they start behaving well with us.”⁵¹ This line blames Moroccans for their corrupted police. Despite criticism, both songs “La Brigade” and “Bouliss” provide an excuse for power dynamics involved in police power and justify police actions.

A critical lyrical analysis is thus essential to uncover the nuanced differences between L7a9ed’s “Kleb Dawla,” Don Bigg’s “Bouliss,” and H-Kayne’s “La Brigade” unraveling the complex meanings that come to surface. While L7a9ed makes a harsh condemnation of police abuse, Don Bigg and H-Kayne’s criticism arise but remain moderate. The fact that these latter songs belong to albums composed and released in 2009 when both Don Bigg and H-Kayne had already gained national and international popularity suggests that both have moderated their criticism to avoid losing the Makhzen’s favor and gained social and economic status. However, L7a9ed’s song does not cross the ‘red lines’⁵² in Morocco where a moderate criticism of the police is allowed as the case of Don Bigg and H-Kayne demonstrate. For this reason, the former editor of *TelQuel* Karim Boukhari, asked in an editorial (*TelQuel* January 21, 2012)⁵³ dedicated to L7a9ed “why him and not the others?” Boukhari claims that the arrest of L7a9ed were significant for a Moroccan society as it mobilized a wide range of people including rich, poor, workers,

⁵⁰ “*k7al dyal lbouliss hlekna f sa7tena.*”

⁵¹ “Yo! *lMaghrib tehala f lbouliss dyalek bach ibedaw I tehelaw fina.*”

⁵² These ‘red lines’ include criticism to the monarchy, questioning the legitimacy of Islam, or challenging Morocco’s territorial integrity, especially regarding sovereignty over the Western Sahara (Smith & Loudiy 2005, pp.1070–1071).

⁵³ http://telquel.ma/2012/02/01/ce-maroc-la_329 [Accessed July 23, 2014].

Islamists, women, social media users, leftists etc. However he did not explain why L7a9ed was incarcerated and not other rappers. The lack of excessive criticism in L7a9ed's song –it did not for example show disapproval for the monarchy or Islam—and Boukhari's difficulty in addressing the difference between L7a9ed and other rappers, suggests that a lyrical analysis does not suffice to determine the layers of meaning behind the case. L7a9ed's incarceration is rather connected with his political activism in the M20F and to a lesser extent with his musical production despite the fact that his music was the excuse to condemn him.

L7a9ed's song "Klab Dawla" was originally released in 2008 (*Jeune Afrique* May 5, 2012; *La Libre Belgique* April 4, 2012),⁵⁴ and was only uploaded to YouTube on October 16, 2010, and then to a Skyrock blog⁵⁵ on October 17, 2010. The song thus existed well before his arrest in May 2012. Moreover, the rapper admitted that the song was his own production, but said that he had not created the video clip with which it was uploaded to YouTube –a clip that is no longer available.⁵⁶ The fact that the song was online since 2010 and that he claimed he was not behind the disparaging images are evidence that the song and video clip were rather used as an excuse to imprison him for his connection to the M20F. Significantly, Don Bigg's track had also been uploaded to YouTube by third parties

⁵⁴http://www.jeuneafrique.com/Article/ARTJAWEB20120518115526/?utm_source=feedburner&utm_medium=twitter&utm_campaign=Feed%3A+jeune_afrique_Politique+%28Jeune+Afrique+Politique%29 [Accessed May 10, 2014]; <http://www.lalibre.be/actu/international/les-rappeurs-marocains-pries-de-moderer-leurs-propos-51b8e887e4b0de6db9c61e7d> [Accessed March 5, 2014].

⁵⁵ This blog was widely used in Morocco by rappers to disseminate their music. Music under the name of L7a9ed was uploaded a day later than YouTube to Skyrock on October 17, 2010 in a profile created on December 25, 2007 (<http://l7a9d.skyrock.com/2939645925-10-wcharwita-klab-dawla-2010.html> [Accessed March 5, 2014]).

⁵⁶ <http://www.france24.com/fr/20120425-justice-maroc-rappeur-mouad-belghouat-rancune-liberte-expression-mouvement-20-fevrier> [Accessed May 10, 2014]; <http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/opinion/2012/06/2012626133253231919.html> [Accessed March 5, 2014].

with video-images that depict police brutality, but Don Bigg has not been arrested.⁵⁷ The difference between Don Bigg and L7a9ed is that by 2011, the former was an empowered artist supported by sectors of the secular civil society initially and later by the Makhzen and with a large fan base,⁵⁸ while the latter was an amateur whose detention could be molded to the Makhzen's agenda. Faced with the possibility of popular support of rappers for the M20F, the Makhzen choose to target L7a9ed because of his limited musical followers or fan base. The arrest of established artists with large fan bases could have intensified demonstrations if the fans had come out in the artist's support. By February 20, 2011, however, L7a9ed was a low profile rapper whose arrest would not cause such social distress. At the same time, his incarceration sent a message to other rappers reminding them the consequences of crossing the state's 'red lines,' and supporting the M20F. According to Karim Tazi, a businessman and activist, the case of L7a9ed was the state's attempt to send a message showing that the 'red lines' were still there.⁵⁹

During L7a9ed's first arrest in September 2011, the international media capitalized on his work as a rapper in order to present his case as an attempt of the state to silence the voice of an artist. International headlines read: "Rapper's Imprisonment Tests Moroccan Reforms" (*National Public Radio* January 6, 2012)⁶⁰ or "Moroccans see limits of reform in rapper's case" (*BBC* November 25, 2011),⁶¹ and emphasized the fact that the rapper was seen as an example of the halted democratic process in Morocco. Other articles took a different slant, and described

⁵⁷ <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ex3i8MIIGU4> [Accessed March 6, 2014].

⁵⁸ See Chapter Two section three on the evolution of Don Bigg's narrative.

⁵⁹ <http://www.yabiladi.com/articles/details/8375/maroc-rappeur-l7a9ed-relaxe-vainqueur.html> [Accessed March 5, 2014].

⁶⁰ <http://www.npr.org/2012/01/06/144798285/rappers-imprisonment-tests-moroccan-reforms> [Accessed March 7, 2014].

⁶¹ <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-15877251> [Accessed March 7, 2014].

L7a9ed as a “political rap star” (*France 24* April 4, 2012),⁶² a poet (*National Public Radio* January 6, 2012)⁶³ or even “one of the Arab world’s best young rappers” (*Aljazeera* June 30, 2012).⁶⁴ Mark LeVine, a scholar on the Middle East and North Africa region and musician himself wrote about L7a9ed in *Aljazeera* (June 30, 2012).⁶⁵ In his account, LeVine simplistically divides the Moroccan rap scene between those willing to cross the ‘red lines’ and those who remain behind them positioning L7a9ed in the former group. LeVine’s account, as well as numerous others of L7a9ed’s case, overlooks two important facts: first, that popular rappers like Don Bigg, H-Kayne and Muslim had already denounced the police in their lyrics, and second, that the song “Klab Dawla” supposedly behind his arrest was a collaboration with rapper Proof 3askri never persecuted by the Moroccan justice system. Even if the lyrics of H-Kayne and Don Bigg were moderate, they still pointed to police corruption and abuse of power. As Figure 20 shows, Don Bigg directly insults the police. Their songs were not, however, mentioned in the media narrative of L7a9ed’s case, which simplified the cultural field by placing emphasis on the rappers political and social actions rather than giving careful attention to his music production. Furthermore, the international media only chose to cover the story of L7a9ed’s sentencing, showing its a lack of interest for equally critical rappers such as 3askri who, contrary to L7a9ed, had been ignored by the Makhzen. Though L7a9ed had released his songs on social media, he only became known as an artist after he was arrested (*Jeune Afrique* May 5, 2012). The fact that L7a9ed was not a

⁶² <http://www.france24.com/fr/20120425-justice-maroc-rappeur-mouad-belghouat-rancune-liberte-expression-mouvement-20-fevrier> [Accessed May 10, 2014].

⁶³ <http://www.npr.org/2012/01/06/144798285/rappers-imprisonment-tests-moroccan-reforms> [Accessed March 7, 2014].

⁶⁴ <http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/opinion/2012/06/2012626133253231919.html> [Accessed March 7, 2014].

⁶⁵ <http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/opinion/2012/06/2012626133253231919.html> [Accessed March 7, 2014].

well-known rapper by the time of his arrest, therefore, deters from the idea that his detention was a Makhzen's attempt to silence Moroccan artists. The fact that some media framed L7a9ed's case as censure, however, allowed the Makhzen to send a message with his second arrest to Moroccan rappers to dissuade them from any criticism.

The fact is that, in addition to L7a9ed, at the time of the M20F demonstrations during the first months of 2011, other rappers lent their support to the movement, including Koman and Philo from Casablanca who did not suffered any persecution by the state. After the February 20 demonstrations, local online media such as Lakome.com, Yabladi.com or Bladi.net chose the rappers from the Casablanca crew Thug Gang, Koman and Philo, as "voices of the movement" due the songs they had released the day of the demonstrations "Ta3bir Chafawi" (Oral Expression). Koman and Philo's song "Ta3bir Chafawi," defined by the webpage Lakome.com at the time of the demonstrations as the hymn of February 20,⁶⁶ deals with corruption, oppression, and social divisions between rich and poor. The song conveys the demonstrations of February 20, 2011, and demands that people speak up and stop being followers: "From today onwards I don't want to be one more sheep of the shepherd who steals our bread without regard."⁶⁷ Later in the song the rappers call for people to take their rights and not wait for the state to grant them: "rights are to be taken not given."⁶⁸ As Philo noted, with "Ta3bir Chafawi" the artists wanted to express their support to the masses demonstrating, but added that the song was not recorded specifically for the demonstration; in fact, he said they did not want their

⁶⁶ <https://fr.lakome.info/archives/culture/50-actualites-culture/325-koman-a-bigg-keddab-hta-lmout.html> [Accessed May 10, 2014]; <http://www.maghress.com/fr/lakomefr/325> [Accessed July 23, 2014]; <http://www.bladi.net/don-bigg-keddab-hta-l-mout.html> [Accessed July 23, 2014].

⁶⁷ "Men lyouma ma b9itch baghi nkoun kebch men kbach ra3i."

⁶⁸ "al7a9 ki tkhad ma ki ta3tach."

artistic production to be hijacked as only a representation of the M20F. It can thus be seen, as Driss Maghraoui (2011, p.681) notes, that the rise of the M20F was as a response not only to the MENA uprisings but also the result of the Moroccan political scene where the power of political parties is outdated and the monarchical institution dominates the political scene. Rapper Koman, later released the song “Casa Lil”⁶⁹ (Casablanca at Night) (2011) as a protest song in response to police brutality against the members of the movement in March 13, 2011 in Casablanca. During the same period, Koman released a second song along with the rapper Philo, a song called “Cha3b Yourid Lhayat Foug Fgig”⁷⁰ (People Want A Good Life) (2011) with a title that plays with the phrase used during the uprisings of 2011 in Tunisia, Egypt, Libya and Syria: “*al Sha’b Yurīd Isqāt al Nizām*” (The People Want The Downfall Of The Regime).⁷¹ The wide use of this phrase in demonstrations, and then in the song, indicates the popular desire to end the authoritarian political regimes across the region (Laachir 2013b, p.43). Rappers Koman and Philo play on the phrase to criticize Don Bigg’s alignment with the Makhzen during the February 20 demonstrations; indeed, the song was originally to be titled “Keddab 7ta l’Mout” (Liar Till Death) in order to hit back at Bigg’s first album and song “Mgharba Tal Mout” (Moroccans Until Death) (Miller & Caubet 2012, p.10).⁷² However, rapper Philo (2013, interview, May 8) claims that even if at the beginning Moroccan news

⁶⁹ <https://soundcloud.com/thug-gang/casa-lill-koman-thug-gang> [Accessed July 23, 2014].

⁷⁰ As Philo (2013, interview, May 8) explained during our interview, the name of this song employs the idiom in Darija “*Foug Figig*” (Beyond Figig), an expression that makes reference to the period where the Moroccan town of Figuig was a thriving economic centre of the region. The song is available at <https://soundcloud.com/thug-gang/cha3b-yourid-lhayat-foug-figig> [Accessed May 10, 2014].

⁷¹ In Muslim’s song “*Fine 7a9na*”⁷¹ (Where Are Our Rights?) (2010), the chorus includes the words “*brou7 bdam*” (with soul, with blood) which echoes the phrase “*biruh, bidam, neafdeek ya...*” (with soul, with blood, we sacrifice for...) a phrase repeated in demonstrations in the Arabic-speaking world.

⁷² <http://www.bladi.net/don-bigg-keddab-hta-l-mout.html> [Accessed May 10, 2014].

outlets supporting the M20F like Lakome.com contacted them, they soon lost interest. The reason behind this, as Philo (Ibid) explained, was that there was a refusal of the rap crew to engage further with the M20F aside from their support with their songs since their will was to remain independent from political movements.

While these rappers support the pro-democracy cry of Moroccan society, they do not want their songs to be associated solely with a movement with a program that oscillates because of internal differences and communication problems (F  rnandez Molina 2011, p.441). In this sense, the lack of credibility on the Moroccan political system must be considered to understand the rappers distance from the M20F despite the fact that this movement is not in itself only political. In a political scene such as the Moroccan with weak parties and a strong civil society, the latter are politically empowered by deciding which NGOs are rewarded over others (Cavatorta 2006, p.208). Many rappers, thus, remained vigilant of the M20F final social and political program. By the time of L7a9ed's detention, the M20F had lost much of its political momentum and the official narrative convinced the population that the movement was no longer necessary.⁷³ In other words, once their main demand of reforming the constitution was 'achieved' according to the Makhzen's narrative (despite the cosmetic character of the changes), the demonization of the M20F proved to be more effective.⁷⁴ This was the same reason that other rappers in Morocco have distanced themselves from M20F. Even those who declared affiliation at the beginning of the movement like the rap crew LBassline, later retracted.⁷⁵ As Dizzy DROS (2013,

⁷³ In Moroccan journalist Ahmed Benchemsi's account of the M20F, protesters started to diminish by mid-May 2011 (<http://ahmedbenchemsi.com/feb20s-rise-and-fall-a-moroccan-story/> [Accessed March 7, 2014]).

⁷⁴ <http://ahmedbenchemsi.com/feb20s-rise-and-fall-a-moroccan-story/> [Accessed March 7, 2014].

⁷⁵ The rap group LBassline declared their commitment to the M20F on January 2013 (<http://fr.lakome.com/index.php/culture/210-l-bassline> [Accessed May 20, 2014]) however announced

interview, February 18), a rapper from Casablanca argued in our interview, though he is radically against L7a9ed's imprisonment, he is not willing to become identified with the M20F neither. Muslim, who released a freestyle song⁷⁶ in 2013 where he said: "I'm not February 20, I'm the whole year,"⁷⁷ pointing out that to be an activist it is not necessary to belong to the M20F. Activist Younes Belghazi interpreted Muslim's words as follows: "Muslim is very clever to say 'I'm not the February 20, but I'm all the year,' and he is very direct to say that even without the M20F, there were people protesting before and there will be protests after" (2013, interview, March 18). Rappers' lack of engagement with the M20F may therefore be explained by the effectiveness of the Makhzen's propaganda in portraying the M20F as a movement whose aim was to divide the country,⁷⁸ the M20F internal differences and the lack of confidence in institutions and groups within the civil society in their capacity to represent the voice of the youth. The strategy of keeping out of the M20F, but at the same time supporting the criticism of the Makhzen suggests that rappers acknowledge that belonging to such a movements puts them in the spotlight. The position of groups like Thug Gang, Muslim, Dizzy DROS or LBassline's position recognize the Makhzen's blurred 'red lines' which intensified during the 2011 uprisings. Rappers in this way seek to keep producing critical work without risking imprisonment as LBassline declared: "Morocco needs its youth outside the

through their web page, then later that year on July 8 that they asserted they did not belong to it (<https://www.facebook.com/LBassline.Officielle> [Accessed March 7, 2014]).

⁷⁶ These are songs that do not have a strict structure and are often without chorus or title.

⁷⁷ "*Ana machi 20 Febrayer, ana l3am kamel.*"

⁷⁸ This idea is further elaborated in Chapter Three section four on "Serving Power: Fighting The 20 February Movement."

prisons; it is useless to sacrifice oneself in such a fashion at a time when we have the opportunity to influence and pass major messages in an intelligent way.”⁷⁹

The lack of support for the M20F also points to the fact that rappers in Morocco do not require the framework of a political movement to raise their voices and criticize national social or political problems. Asef Bayat’s concept of “social *nonmovement*” (2010) works well here, and is useful to frame the relationship between rappers in Morocco and the politics of the budding rap scene. Bayat claims that:

Nonmovements refers to the collective actions of noncollective actors; they embody shared practices of large numbers of ordinary people whose fragmented but similar activities trigger much social change, even though these practices are rarely guided by an ideology or recognizable leadership and organization. (2010, p.14)

Even if Bayat is not necessarily referring to artistic productions when he defines the concept, he includes urban youth as part of the subaltern involved in social *nonmovements* (Ibid, p.17). I use the term here strategically to refer to the idea of a heterogeneous collective that shares the practice of a particular urban culture, however, not necessarily aspire to form an organized collective with a particular ideology. The inclusion of the term ‘movement’ suggests the determination of a collective, in this case, youth and young rappers, to reclaim a space in the field of Moroccan cultural production. However, as Bayat claims, youth *nonmovements* in particular focus on protecting youth habitus, that is, “Defending and extending the conditions that allow the young to assert their individuality, creativity and lightness and free them from anxiety over the prospect of their future” (2010, p.18). In this

⁷⁹ <http://fr.lakome.com/index.php/culture/210-l-bassline> [Accessed May 20, 2014].

sense, young rappers maintain their individuality by producing different kinds of music styles within the rap genre. All these contributions emphasize the idea of *nonmovement*, that is, members of the hip hop scene shape each other's work without a specific organization or agenda. Nevertheless, as a *nonmovement*, rappers participate in the public sphere without compromising their individuality. This results in the emergence of a strong rap scene, without a common and unifying agenda, which nevertheless allows them to share certain ideas about their own social context and, more importantly, is difficult to dismantle in its entirety. Therefore, even if Thug Gang, Muslim, Dizzy DROS or LBassline do not claim to belong to the M20F, as part a *nonmovement*, they can still reproduce discourses of cultural resistance that connect them to the M20F.

In particular Muslim, however, has been neglected as a valid voice of dissent by some groups within the secular civil society. The next section examines the reasons behind the neglect of rapper Muslim's work by some secular sectors of the civil society which has, in turn, endorsed the Makhzen's attitude towards this rapper. I argue that it is a result, on the one hand, of Muslim's criticism of the Makhzen, and, on the other hand, of secularists groups' perception of him as an Islamist rapper. While the international media's account of L7a9ed's is framed by an idea of democracy and 'progress' that has been endorsed by external entities, namely the European Union, the ability of other rappers, especially those perceived as 'Islamist,' to voice dissent has been overlooked.

3. Silencing Voices of Dissent

Early Moroccan rap songs such as those of Aminoffice and Muslim with their groups Double A and Zan9a Flow respectively, which came out during the late 1990s, provide evidence of the existence of songs that denounced social and political problems in Morocco since the birth of rap in the country. Some rappers like Don Bigg who denounced social malaises, corruption and the hardship of the urban unprivileged have been highlighted by researchers such as Dominique Caubet (2005) or Aomar Boum (2012a; 2012b; 2013). However, Caubet and Boum as well as other researchers have ignored rappers like Muslim, who is well-established with socially and politically engaged lyrics and a large fan base.⁸⁰ Muslim has also received little attention from the Moroccan French language media, specifically *TelQuel*, *Actuel*, *Le Soirs-echos*, *Maroc-Hebdo* and *Libération*. Although these magazines and newspapers advertise events in which Muslim has participated, such as the music festival *Mawzine*, the articles devoted to the rapper and his career are extremely scarce or non-existent. This section argues that Muslim does not fully execute the idea of ‘progress’ imported from European liberal secularism, which portrays religiosity as undemocratic and backward championed by the Moroccan secular civil society (Cavatorta 2006, p.208; 2009, p.145). Moreover, the fact that Muslim is from Tangiers speaks to the North-South divide and the historical marginalization of the North and its cultural activities by the Makhzen and the urban elites of the southern cities.

⁸⁰ Considering official Facebook pages, Muslim has over 470,000 likes, Don Bigg 173,000 and H-Kayne 33,000. The majority of fans on Muslim’s page range in age from 18-24, and come from Cansablanca (<https://www.facebook.com/MuslimProd/likes>). The majority of Don Bigg’s fans come from the same age group and city (<https://www.facebook.com/DONBIGGPAGE/likes>). Furthermore, his last single “Law Kan Lwa9i3 Law7a” (If Reality Was a Canvas) (2011) has the most views of any Moroccan song on You Tube with nearly 3 million (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1B6WNBjFka0>) [Data collected on July 2013].

The different strategies of the media, researchers, secularists and the Makhzen have worked together to silence voices that do not fit into their respective agendas. The fact that Muslim is largely ignored by the media, by the programmers of big music festivals, and the absence of big music festivals in the northern region epitomizes the marginalization of the North. Contrary to rappers of his cohort who are often invited to big music festivals,⁸¹ he has performed until recently⁸² outside of these festivals. Although Tangiers hosts a jazz festival called *Tanjazz*,⁸³ the city is deprived of any big music events sponsored and controlled by the Makhzen.⁸⁴ Muslim has rarely appeared in documentaries that deal with the rap scene or the Nayda movement, like *I Love Hip Hop in Morocco (2007)*, *This is Maroc (2011)*, or *Casanayda (2007)*.⁸⁵ Even a magazine like *TelQuel*, which regularly opposes the Makhzen discourse, and which often dedicates articles to rappers,⁸⁶ including several interviews with Don Bigg (*TelQuel* September 9, 2006; April 3, 2012), rarely mentions or interviews Muslim, despite his popularity and success. The Tangiers scene is never mentioned in these documentaries or popular magazines, largely

⁸¹ For example, Muslim participated at the *Festival de Casablanca*, once with the group Zan9a Flow in 2006 and solo in 2010, however, H-Kayne has performed at this music festival on four occasions, and Don Bigg three.

⁸² Muslim participated in *Mawazine* for the first time in 2012.

⁸³ <http://www.tanjazz.org/index.htm> [Accessed April 10, 2014].

⁸⁴ The official sponsor is Renault and its institutional partners are foreign institutions like the Instituto Cervantes of Tangiers (<http://www.tanjazz.org/partenaires.htm>) [Accessed April 10, 2014].

⁸⁵ Although the documentary is mainly set in Casablanca, rappers H-Kayne from Meknes or Fnaïre from Marrakech appear, but neither Muslim or any other rappers from the north of Morocco are featured.

⁸⁶ http://www.telquel-online.com/archives/469/mage_culture_469.shtml [Accessed April 10, 2014]; http://www.telquel-online.com/archives/462/mage_culture_462.shtml [Accessed April 10, 2014]; <http://www.telquel-online.com/Culture/News/Rap-Chanter-clipper-secouer/542%20%20> [Accessed April 10, 2014].

because the northern areas of Morocco remain peripheral to the francophone cultural scene in the country.⁸⁷

This exclusion is embedded in the northern Rif region, which has been marginalized for decades by the monarchy. The Amazigh region of the Rif, extending along the Mediterranean coast from Tangiers to Melilla, is one of the most marginalized region of the country (Laachir 2013c, p.298). The region's geographical and historical connection with Spain distinguishes it from the rest of the country, which has a stronger French influence. According to the Treaty of Fez, which was signed in 1912, Morocco was made a French protectorate. Nonetheless, the administration of the country was divided into two, with Spain exerting influence over the northern region and the international zone of Tangiers (1923-1956), and France controlling the main cities and the natural resources of the South (Howe 2005, p.34). The Rif Mountains create a natural border between the Mediterranean coastal cities and the rest of the country that empowers Amazigh's historical resistance to foreign powers and the Makhzen (Lehtinen 2008, pp.124–125). Independence, however, had a negative impact on this region as the region was neglected by central governments and the state, leaving the northern region politically and economically marginalized in relation to the rest of the country (Sater 2010, p.26). This marginalization contributed to the resentment towards the late King Hassan II who failed to integrate the region into the Moroccan nation (Lehtinen 2008, p.128). Moreover, by Hassan II's brutal military campaign against the Rif

⁸⁷ In a series of episodes *Al-Jazeera* recorded on Moroccan music called "Next Music Station," (2011) Tangiers and Northern Morocco were included. However, when discussing music in the city of Meknes, the H-Kayne group was interviewed, but neither Muslim, nor the rap scene in Tangiers was mentioned, and the focus was solely on traditional music. Although the North is not marginalized here, the importance of Muslim within the rap scene was downplayed in favor of H-Kayne, who is considered less politically powerful.

region from 1958-1959, which was launched to quell the Rif Revolution, resulted in a tense relationship until the king's death in 1999.

The marginalization of the north has created a micro-region that is “defined in physical-geographic, cultural, economic, administrative and political terms” (Lehtinen 2008, p.122) promoting regional identities at the margins of a national one. The city of Tangiers and the northern region is also associated with *harragas* or clandestine migrants waiting to cross the strait of Gibraltar to Europe. However, in the past, the city was known for its artists, writers, and diplomats, such as Paul Bowles, during its period as an independent International Zone in 1956 and throughout the decades of the 60s, 70s and 80s (Lehtinen 2008, p.127).⁸⁸ Nevertheless, the Mohammed VI visit in 1999 initiated a change after forty years of neglect by the central government in Rabat (Ibid 2008, p.126). Since then, the inauguration in 2007 of the Tangier-Mediterranean Project, a new commercial and industrial port, and the construction of the high-speed rail line Casablanca-Tangiers⁸⁹ has not only revitalized the Tangiers zone, but whitewashed the region's perception of monarchy. King Mohammed VI is believed to be the initiator of the economic development of the zone, in contrast with his father's disregard for the region.⁹⁰ Despite the king's attempt to develop the North, other sectors, particularly the cultural field, have not followed suit, thus perpetuating the North's marginalization.

⁸⁸ During the period when it was known as the International Zone (1923-1940), no one's land, Tangiers was governed by eight Western countries, and US citizens living there were immune to municipal laws in the US. This condition made a group of writers attracted to Tangiers, such as William S. Burroughs, Paul Bowles and Tennessee Williams—who lived in Tangiers for a number of years. Through literature, they created a city that fascinated the US, as “to most Americans in the 1950's, the city of Tangiers conjured up images of excess” (Edwards 2005, p.212).

⁸⁹ <http://entreprise.oncf.ma/LGV/Pages/TGVauMaroc.aspx> [Accessed September 9, 2013]; <http://entreprise.oncf.ma/NosProjets/Pages/TangerPort/TangerPort.aspx> [Accessed September 9, 2013].

⁹⁰ <http://www.latribune.fr/blogs/euromed/20130801trib000778596/tanger-med-le-port-qui-dynamise-tout-le-nord-du-maroc.html> [Accessed April 10, 2014].

Muslim is to a large extent ignored by the above mentioned Moroccan French language media due to the fact that he does not speak French and that his lyrics are perceived as ‘Islamist.’ Dominique Caubet claims that there is a trend of Islamist rappers in Morocco with Muslim as its main figurehead (*L’Express International* June 12, 2013, p.51). However, as this section suggests, although Muslim and other rappers and musicians in the Moroccan music scene often refer to Islam in their songs,⁹¹ these references reflect the significance of Islam in Moroccan society and do not necessarily indicate a political agenda. Therefore, it is necessary to differentiate between Islamist, a term that has a political connotation and indicates a political militancy, and Islamic, which refers to following Islamic morals and lifestyle without necessarily wishing to politicize the religion. In an online blog,⁹² the researcher Yves Gonzalez-Quijano argued that *rap islamiste* (Islamist rap), expressed in French, is the meeting point of rap and political Islam. Yet, as Jossef Massad argues, there is a lack of clarity of what Islam actually means as Islam has “acquired referents and significations it did not formerly possess” (2015, p.4).

In the case of Muslim, his denomination as an Islamist rapper in detriment of other labels such as ‘engaged’ denotes the depreciation of liberal secular groups to Islamists as conveyors of ‘progress,’ democracy and dissent. Both secular sectors of the Moroccan civil society and the Makhzen have framed the PJD and Islamist group’s narrative of the Islamic civil society as “obscurantist” (Burke 1998a, p.4; Howe 2005, p.380; Aït Mous & Wazif 2008, p.295; Graioud & Belghazi 2013, p.269). In his book, Mohamed Daadaoui (2011, p.119) argues that the demonization

⁹¹ Nina Ter Laan doctoral thesis tackles the connection between Islam, music and political voices in Morocco.

⁹² <http://cpa.hypotheses.org/3237> [Accessed July 23, 2014].

of the Islamist narrative is a response to the challenge that the rise of a party like PJD and the Justice and Charity group poses to the Makhzen. Therefore, by supporting the obscurantist narrative, secularists are in fact allied with the Makhzen's agenda in opposing a common threat, the PJD and Islamists. Moroccan French language media, like the magazines *L'Express International*, *Actuel*, *Le Soirs-echos*, and *TelQuel*, or news websites, like Yabladi.com or Lakome.com, as well as other secular groups have also supported the rappers that conform to their secularist agenda as symbols of social discontent, as these sectors believe that political Islam is a setback to democratic achievements (Cavatorta 2006, p.209; Cavatorta 2009, p.143). The magazine *TelQuel* has supported rappers like Mobydick or Don Bigg who have publicly expressed their opposition to Islamist politics and the PJD. In an interview with *TelQuel* (July 7, 2012), Mobydick expresses his fear of the PJD. After winning the *Tremplin* contest of *L'Boulevard* in 2007, Mobydick was often featured in French language magazines like *TelQuel* (June 4, 2012; June 8, 2012; June 19, 2012; May 13, 2013), *L'Express International* (June 12, 2013) and, *L'Officiel Hommes Maroc* (2011).⁹³ He also participated in the Casablanca Book Fair 2014 as part of a session on urban poets organized by Institut Français, which suggests that the institute is also supportive of this kind of activism.⁹⁴ In the same manner, Don Bigg has been praised by the secular civil society as Chapter Two section three argues. Moreover, despite the accusation of co-option, Don Bigg's latest cultural production including "Mabghitch"⁹⁵ (2011) (I Don't Want To) or "Fhamtini Oula La"⁹⁶ (Do You Understand Me or Not) (2012) also oppose Islamism and the PJD's control of the

⁹³ http://patrimoine.jalougallery.com/lofficiel-hommes-maroc-numero_3-page_51-detailp-70-7019-51.html [Accessed April 10, 2014].

⁹⁴ http://www.if-maroc.org/IMG/pdf/brochure_siel_2014_web.pdf [Accessed April 10, 2014].

⁹⁵ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D3GMgKehhk0> [Accessed April 10, 2014].

⁹⁶ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6a3hmarFcUI> [Accessed April 9, 2014].

country. The latter song's title sarcastically makes a direct reference to Prime Minister Abdelilah Benkirane's constant use of the phrase "fhamtini oula la" (do you understand me or not).⁹⁷ In the song "Mabghitch," Don Bigg claims that Islamists are corrupt and use religion to win power: "Who will represent the people? A bunch of bearded guys coming to make people unbelievers? A bunch of bearded guys who use religion in a fake manner?"⁹⁸ The video clip for "Mabghitch," represents political Islam as corrupt politicians with beards and white djellabas giving a briefcase to other men wearing suits.

The perception of some groups of the secular civil society of Muslim as an Islamist rapper is related to his reference to religion in his lyrics and his artistic name, but these both conform to mainly conservatism and not Islamism. Muslim's latest songs "Dounia Fania"⁹⁹ (The World is Ending) (2011) or "Law Kan Lwa9i3 Law7a"¹⁰⁰ (If Reality was a Canvas) (2011) illustrate this idea. The first song, "Dounia Fania," revolves around the idea of the evil in the world and claims religion will save the world, as Muslim states in the second verse:

People aren't satisfied, nothing is enough/we ate each other, "blessing" is an old word/we lost everything good when living became expensive/we were defeated by the devil/we don't stay and listen to those who cry/we don't sympathize with those who suffer/we construct around us tall walls/we are not lovable anymore/there are no longer affectionate souls to care for us/we became worst than evil like a stone, and our face is sharp/The strength of the man, nothing has value/look where we have arrived and where our world is going/hell goes by and we're only on the border/we'll know that all is rotten when we

⁹⁷ <http://www.menara.ma/fr/menara-mag/musique/2012/10/16/313837-don-bigg-revient-avec-un-nouvel-eau-single-fhamtini-oula-la.html> [Accessed April 9, 2014].

⁹⁸ "*chkoun li ghay mettal cha3b? rba3a dial l7aya li jayne y kafro cha3b? rba3a dial l7aya kay rekbo 3la dine batel.*"

⁹⁹ http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-ju_13jfI5s [Accessed April 11, 2014].

¹⁰⁰ <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1B6WNbjFka0> [Accessed April 11, 2014].

wake up/the past is the past and our eyes remain unclear/because it hasn't finished, there is still an opportunity/we have to go back to religion and learn the sacred letter.¹⁰¹

In this song of despair, Muslim depicts the hardship of a life where people have lost the right way; the rapper believes lack of morals is part of the problem. This song is the rapper's most intimate, as he told me in our interview in June 26, 2013. Yet, the idea expressed in the song of people leaving aside the correct path is very common in popular Moroccan imagery. While this message is used by Islamists to promote their own ideas and the idea that Islam is the way to rule, these lyrics do not mark him as an Islamist rapper, as there are no direct political messages.

Contrary to "Dounia Fania," however, in the song "Law Kan Lwa9i3 Law7a" (If Reality was a Canvas) (2011), Muslim elaborates on specific political ideas by which he would rebuild Morocco. Muslim suggests getting rid of bars and casinos, keeping mosques open and encourages women to wear a veil: "I would paint a long corniche without casinos or bars/Paint many mosques open night and day/Paint the girl of my country covering her hair with the veil."¹⁰² Despite the fact that these lines directly reference Islamic precepts against alcohol and gambling, references to the evils of alcohol are not unique to Muslim's narrative, as the next section argues.

Muslim's reference to veiling women, however, stands out, as popular rappers have restrained from focusing on women in general. The female presence in

¹⁰¹ "nass mabqat techba3 o hta haja makafia/welina naklo f ba3tna, ra7ma kelma balia/khessarna kol nfiss mli donia welat ghalia/khessarna m3a yebliss b darba l9adia/mabqinashi nssm3o mli tghani l3ayn lbakia/mabqinashi ne7esso bli kwa l9loub chakia/kol wahed fina bna 3la rasso 7yout 3alia/mabqa yed 7nin ydomek nel a7dan adafia/welina 9ba7 mn char f7al le7jar 7roufna madia/l3effa rojla, hta haja massawia/chouf fin wssalna w fin donia bina mashia/mashia lelja7im we7na daba ghir fel7ashia/fokash 3anfio n3erfo bli raha rachia?/9arreb yfout lfout w 3youna baqa mghachia/hit baqa/mafnat ya3ni lforssa baqia/khessna nerj3o n din w ne9raw l7rouf achafia."

¹⁰² "nrssm kournich twil bla kazino wala bar/nrsm chhal mn jam3 maftouh lil w nhar/nrsm bnt bladi satra rassa bl 7ijab."

Moroccan rap lyrics is normally limited to certain topics. Women are used to represent the nation, as with the use of the *khamisa* and the hand of henna as symbols of protection in the songs of Fnaïre.¹⁰³ Additionally, women have been sexualized in the songs of rapper Chaht Man who uses the naked female body in his productions.¹⁰⁴ Also, rapper Si Simo's song "Kilimini"¹⁰⁵ (Posh) (2012) employs women to represent the urban upper classes. Moreover, Muslim and Don Bigg have written lyrics dedicated to their mothers in a song called "Yemma"¹⁰⁶ (Mother) (2006) and "Lik"¹⁰⁷ (For You) (2009) respectively which is a sign of the high respect mothers hold in the Moroccan popular culture. Moreover, the songs "Sawt Nssa"¹⁰⁸ (The Voice of Women) (2010) by female rappers Soultana and "Kola Mra"¹⁰⁹ (Every Woman) (2010) by Tendresse are songs that denounce the hardship of women's life in Morocco. Nevertheless, women's everyday lives rarely feature in the Moroccan rappers' songs, even with female rappers whose musical production is scarce.¹¹⁰

In the song "Law Kan Lwa9i3 Law7a," Muslim also makes reference to illiterate women brought from villages to work as maids in the cities: "I would paint the last girl who was working in houses/And now she has books in her hand and is going to study, full of dignity."¹¹¹ In this verse, Muslim shows his social awareness of the suffering of the poor by claiming the right to an education for illiterate women, thus helping to end their exploitation. Though here Muslim calls for women's role in

¹⁰³ See Chapter One section three.

¹⁰⁴ See Chapter Five section two.

¹⁰⁵ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ITGBUB0kOFU> [Accessed May 20, 2014].

¹⁰⁶ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WfMXMfeHblM> [Accessed May 20, 2014].

¹⁰⁷ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cx25wHsQ0zs> [Accessed May 20, 2014].

¹⁰⁸ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TK9Pcvf8CG4> [Accessed May 20, 2014].

¹⁰⁹ https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZQDM_EVZsKU [Accessed May 20, 2014].

¹¹⁰ A study on gender in Moroccan popular music and particularly in rap exceeds the scope of this chapter. Nevertheless, the chapters of this thesis constitute snapshots of the research of gender and rap regarding the nation, the use of street language, representation of women, and so forth.

¹¹¹ "*nrssam akhir tifla kant fdyour khdama/wdaba fydha ktoub machia t9ra bkol karama.*"

the Moroccan society to improve, Dominique Caubet in *L'Express International* (June 12, 2013, p.51) highlights Muslim as an Islamist and not as an *engagé* rapper denouncing social malaise. Because women right's activists believe that Islamists are an obstacle to gain equal rights (Pratt 2006, p.138), the veil proves to be more powerful in determining Muslim's politics than denouncing social inequalities. Moreover, the international community contributes to the division between Islamists and secular civil society groups, as it opposes political Islam in the decision making process of the country's politics (Cavatorta 2009, pp.142–143). In this sense, even if as Cavatorta (2006, p.209) clarifies that some Islamists may have a peculiar views about democracy, he also asserts that they certainly strongly oppose an autocratic rule. Yet, Muslim's condemnation of female exploitation is not deemed as 'progressive' because he is framed as Islamist and thus 'backward' and 'uncivil.'

In Morocco, many rappers, and other musicians like Gnawa, Aissawa and Andalusi, to name a few, often use religion as part of their narrative reflecting the centrality of Islam in the national identity and everyday life – as the first and second sections of Chapter One suggests. Further examples in rap music include the track “Al Khouf”¹¹² (Fear) (2006) by Don Bigg where the rapper connects the people's fear of the Makhzen to a religious narrative: “Raise your heads all free Moroccans and overcome fear/Raise your hands with me all those who don't have fear in their heart/You fear the police man, fear the municipality, fear the ones who have money/you fear everyone/and don't fear God.”¹¹³ In these lines, Don Bigg tells ordinary people that the real one who should be feared is God and impels them to

¹¹² <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zyNqcD85ipY> [Accessed April 28, 2014].

¹¹³ “*Hezzou ryoskom ya li mgharba 7rar ou baraka men lkhoulf/Hezzou ydikom m3aya ya li f 9loubkom makinch lkhoulf/Tkhaf men lboulissi tkhaf men ljama3a tkhaf men li 3ando flouss/Tkhafo men koulchi ma tkhafo men Allah.*”

fight political power and social inequalities by using their fear of God as a source of empowerment. The prevalence of God in rappers' narrative of oppression also emerges in Dizzy DROS' track "3alam"¹¹⁴ (Crazy/World) (2013) in which the rapper examines Moroccan society and global malaise. At the end of the chorus, Dizzy DROS states "My world is crazy/I scream, but who is going to hear me/there's only God to save me."¹¹⁵ In this verse, DROS, like Muslim and Bigg, resorts to his religious identity to find a way to deal with the problems around him, a common recourse for a great portion of the Moroccan society. Muslim's song, "Dounia Fania," Don Bigg's "Al Khouf" and Dizzy DROS' "3alam" use religious belief as a way to fight the oppression and despair the rappers encounter around them and not as part of a politicized message.

In this respect, Muslim does not consider himself to be an Islamist rapper, but a rapper whose work is closely connected to day-to-day life greatly informed by his religion and society that surrounds him. When I asked him whether he sees himself as an Islamist rapper, he responded by saying:

Muslim: (Laughing) I am not an Islamist rapper. I mean, who talks about Islamic topics and all that, Islam is in many things in life. If I say in my songs, don't steal don't do drugs respect your mom and all these things. That's what Islam says, but I don't go deeper than that. I am not a preacher (*Da3iya*). But we still have that Islamic part of our identity. We say for example "Dounia Fania" (The World is Ending) and we only run for money and

¹¹⁴ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Y-rdesHDCsE> [Accessed April 28, 2014].

¹¹⁵ "3alami 3alam; kanghawet w chkoun li ghay sma3ni ba9i ghi rabbi li y3te9ni."

there's a day when we all die and this and that, but no deeper than that, like go to pray or do similar things (Laughing). (Muslim 2013, interview, June 26)¹¹⁶

The fact that Muslim's politics share PJD's values was confirmed when Muslim declared in an interview with Newz.ma in May 21, 2014 that he had voted for PJD in order to bring some change to the country; however, he claimed to be deceived by this party as nothing has changed.¹¹⁷ His feeling of deception is expressed in his last album *Al-Rissala* (The Letter) (2014), especially in the song "Ntouma Ghir Kathadro" (You Are Only Talk) (2014) where Muslim openly criticizes Morocco's Prime Minister Abdelillah Benkirane from the PJD party. Muslim accuses Benkirane of being an actor and washing his hands of the country's problems: "We switched on the TV and found a play of the artist Benkirane/One-man show in the parliament/We didn't understand anything except that nothing is in his hands."¹¹⁸ Therefore, while Muslim's lyrics and political ideas may be in tune with PJD's project, the rapper remains as independent critical voice without blindly bolstering any political group.

Another Moroccan rapper called Chekhsar better meets the criteria of being an Islamist rapper in the sense that he uses rap to transmute the ideas of political Islam. Chekhsar gained fame by performing at PJD's electoral campaign meetings during November 2011 (*Jeune Afrique* January 23, 2013; *TelQuel* January 31,

¹¹⁶ *Machi Islamist ya3ni kanhdar 3la mawadi3 l'islam, walakin l'islam fih bezzaf d l7ajat fhamti, ila 9olt lk f Rap ma tsra9chi ma t3melchi droga 7tarem yemma, bezzaf d l7wayj li kan9olohom f Rap ya3ni 7ta l'islam kay 9olhom, fhamti, b7al hakda ya3ni ma kant3ama9chi f ya3ni anjib ana machi da3iya, fhamti kifach, walakin katb9a fik dik la cote islamic, mli kanhadro matalan kan9olo Dounia Fania w 7na matalan ghi kanjriw mor lflouss w hadi w hadi w 7na gha yji wa7ed lwa9t ghan moutou ou kda, ya3ni b7al hakda, walakin ma kant3ama9chi ya3ni 7ta nwsal annani da3iya, nodo tsalliw wla.*"

¹¹⁷ Interview with Muslim in Méditel Morocco Music Awards 2014 (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XDtRTNX-8VY&feature=youtu.be&app=desktop> [Accessed June 2, 2014]).

¹¹⁸ "9lebna jbarna masra7iya le lfannan Benkirane/One man show f lbarlaman/Mafhamna walo men ghir ma fyeddo walo."

2013).¹¹⁹ Chekhsar has produced a prolific collection of videos in podcast format called “El Qurān Yemshi” (The Moving Quran), which are dedicated to discussing the precepts of Islam and the behavior of ‘good’ Muslims.¹²⁰ Chekhsar’s musical production goes beyond political Islam and he also denounces the corruption of Morocco’s elite – particularly the elite Fessi families in “Ana Howa L’Fassi (Risala ila el Fassi)”¹²¹ (I’m L’Fassi [letter for El Fassi]) (2011). Therefore, while for Chekhsar, music is another tool to denounce social malaise, contrary to Muslim, he preaches Islam. Moreover, Chekhsar is better known for his videos than his music production. Nevertheless, despite the fact that other Moroccan rappers refer to God and Islam, and despite Chekhsar’s notoriety, the fact that only Muslim is signaled as an Islamist suggests his large fan base specially among urban unprivileged youth, makes him an obstacle to the idea of democracy boosted by secular groups and the international community.

Explicit references to Islam including *salat* (prayer) or *zakat* (alms) are also present in American rap, for example in the work of Lupe Fiasco or Busta Rhymes, or French rap, as for example in the lyrics of French rapper Médine (Aidi 2011, pp.35–36).¹²² However, these rappers are not referred to as Islamist rappers. Moreover, Juan Flores (2004, p.82) cites lyrics that reference God in Puerto Rican rap: “and at night I prayed to God and the holy mother.” Yet Flores does not categorize these rappers as “Christian.” The dismissal of Islamist rap denotes the

¹¹⁹ <http://www.jeuneafrique.com/Article/JA2715p013.xml0/> [Accessed June 2, 2014]; <http://www.telquel-online.com/Culture/Mag-culture/Portrait-Le-cheikh-du-hip-hop/555> [Accessed June 2, 2014].

¹²⁰ Chekhsar’s YouTube channel gathers 174 videos with songs, podcasts, and radio and TV interviews with the rapper (<https://www.youtube.com/user/ilya04s/videos> [Accessed May 19, 2014]).

¹²¹ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LFC1lqB-gXU> [Accessed May 19, 2014].

¹²² Islamic faith and Arabic terms have been part of hip hop since the early 1970s, as they are also related to the American racial discourse (Aidi 2009; 2011) with, for example, the conversion to Islam of Civil Rights Movement leader Malcolm X or the creation of the Nation of Islam.

international community's belief that democracy is not compatible with Islam, or, otherwise said, that political Islam is not democratic, an reductionist and debunked idea (Daadaoui 2011, p.106). In the Moroccan case, Cavatorta provides evidence that despite Western scholars' criticism to an Islamist group like Justice and Charity, this group's narrative is based on "the freedom and the right of people to choose their own government" (Cavatorta 2009, p.147). The work of Muslim is demonized in the same way as Islamists groups within this national and international political context. However, even if Muslim's lyrics revolve around religious and moral principles, his cultural production complies with rap music around the world in that it also addresses social issues such as drug abuse, alcoholism, youth unemployment or poverty and thus, transmits certain cultural values (Kitwana 2004, p.344).

Branding some rappers as Islamist and claiming Muslim as its figurehead is proof of how some secularist groups prefer to disregard voices of dissent that do not match their own political agenda in detriment of listening to the urban unprivileged youth. This portrays parts of the secular civil society as detached from the masses demands and unable to relate to its needs. Shaping the notion of dissent to fit into a secularist agenda does not recognize the place of religion in Moroccan society, perpetuates the hegemony of certain groups within the civil society favoring unprivileged youth sense of social exclusion. Not listening to voices with which young poor people relate means that these voices need to fight harder than other groups to gain self-expression in the public arena. Nevertheless, Muslim has remained a player in the rap scene, despite being ignored in the Moroccan cultural field. The next section looks further into Muslim's ability to relate and narrate urban

unprivileged youth experiences of marginalization and despair. Muslim's work is evidence of the fact that Islam and Islamist groups may also convey dissent.

4. Engaging with the Unprivileged Urban

Muslim's appeal among the urban unprivileged youth has continued to exist outside power struggles that divide hip hop into 'good' (secularist) rap versus 'bad' (Islamist) rap. The absence of festivals controlled by the Makhzen in the North and the historical regional marginalization of this region has granted with Muslim with 'street credibility'¹²³ in the eyes of youth. Though the categorization of his music production as Islamist obscures his profound critical discourse, Muslim's lyrics dwell on a wide variety of topics that include criticisms of patriotic narratives, social inequalities, corruption and everyday life suffering. This section argues that Muslim's narrative, even if conservative or occasionally Islamist is also and more importantly a narrative of resistance. Muslim deploys a narrative of dissent by engaging with the malaise of urban unprivileged youth unraveling the local specificities of this young people. Therefore, Muslim discredits some of the secular civil society sectors and cultural stakeholders that consider that in order to be a politically engaged, artists must discard religion as a conveyor of democracy. Thus Muslim may be included beside vocal opponents of the Makhzen who have been religious scholars and artists, and that have been overlooked by those in Morocco who support an idea of democracy following the European liberal tradition.

¹²³ The notion of 'street credibility' is further explored in Chapter Five.

Muslim is one of the pioneers of the Moroccan rap music scene with one of the longest and most productive careers in the country,¹²⁴ and with a large following of Moroccan youth.¹²⁵ Dominique Caubet, author of the documentary *Casanayda* and former researcher at the Jacques Berques Center in Rabat, claims that Muslim has resounding success with the Moroccan working class: “His discourse... is without a doubt the most appealing to the vast majority of the Moroccan society” (*L’Express International* June 12, 2013, p.51). This idea is presented in a meme popularized on social media platforms where Muslim (at the top) is presented as the “best rapper of 2013” while Don Bigg (at the bottom) is the best “7ass” (which translates as an “ass licker) of the year [Figure 21].



Figure 21. Muslim and Don Bigg meme on Facebook in 2013

¹²⁴ Muslim has released more albums and singles throughout his career than any other rapper in Morocco. Since he left Zan9a Flow and started his solo career, he released a maxi album and an album in 2005 called *L9atra* (The Drop) and *Strictly for My Souljaz* respectively; the album *Bghini wella Krahni* (Love Me or Hate Me) in 2006; the maxi *Mor Sour* (Behind the Wall) in 2008; the album *Al Moutamarred Vol. 1* (Aka the Rebellious) in 2009; the single and video clip “Fin 7a9na” (Where Are Our Rights?) in 2010 and the singles “Dounia Fania” (The World is Ending) in 2011 and “Law Kan Lwa9i3 Law7a” (If Reality Was a Canvas) in 2011.

¹²⁵ See note 80.

Moreover, during my fieldwork, I had the chance to meet a group of students from the English department at the Mohammed V University of Rabat. Most of these students expressed a preference for Muslim over other rappers, pointing to the depth and quality of his lyrics. These students' opinions were in line with the opinions of many more young people I encountered in Morocco.

The historical marginalization of Tangiers and the northern region of Morocco explain Muslim's focus on the city. As Alison Parteger (2009, p.1032) suggests, Tangiers' connection to Islamist activism is a response to the secularist modernizing trends of postcolonial states. However, Tangiers' link to religious conservatism also reveals a narrative of resistance. During the 1990s, Tangiers, and in particular the neighborhood of Beni Makkada, experienced an uprising led by youth who targeted banks, cars and a national guard post. The unrest was provoked by a drug crackdown and a general strike organized to command the government to raise the minimum wage (Ketterer 2001). This neighborhood, known for its history of rebelliousness,¹²⁶ is perceived as the fiefdom of the M20F in the North of Morocco (TelQuel July 30, 2011; Hannoum 2013, pp.280–282). While the secular sector attempts to read Muslim's songs through an obscurantist narrative, his music reflects the narrative of rebelliousness and resistance embedded in Tangiers' political activism. Muslim and the youth of Tangiers draw on this narrative of resistance that allows them, as a majorly excluded social group, to “forge identities, enlarge solidarities, and extend their protest beyond their immediate circle to include the unknown, the strangers” (Bayat 2010, p.12).

¹²⁶ <http://www.lejournaldetanger.com/article.php?a=2438> [Accessed May 10, 2014].

The song “Zna9i Tanja”¹²⁷ (Streets of Tangiers) (2005), a collaboration between Muslim and another rapper from Tangiers and his group Kachela called La-N aka Amir L9awafi (Prince of Rhymes),¹²⁸ explores the urban unprivileged youth street life of the northern city. As Muslim explained during our interview in Tangiers on June 26, 2013: “In “Zna9i Tanja” I talk about what’s happening in the streets of Tangiers: crimes and drugs, how guys go to jail, and war between guys and hoods and people fighting for nothing, the war with police. I describe how the streets of Tangiers are.”¹²⁹ In order to describe the hardships experienced by youth from neighborhoods in Tangiers, in the song “Zna9i Tanja” Muslim employs his own life experience using imagery from the streets to depict this despair: “In the streets of Tangiers I see the criminals walking/In the streets of Tangiers people swallow poison (drugs)/In the streets of Tangiers people are hungry/In the streets of Tangiers people follow and are followed.”¹³⁰ Using a first-person perspective, in this song Muslim portrays the street as a public space that reveals the social malaise of Tangiers. Drugs and alcohol embody these social illnesses, as Muslim raps: “Guys got used dealing drugs/to drinking alcohol/they become crazy/black or white he took it by force, his mom still remembers when he took the wrong way/they think this is real manhood/guys smell glue the whole world is smelling now.”¹³¹

¹²⁷ <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PVsRIJmJkFk> [Accessed May 20, 2014].

¹²⁸ *9achela* is the name of the crew formed by Muslim with other rappers in Tangiers that has now converted into Kachela Records (Muslim 2013, interview, June 26). This crew included Muslim, L3arbe, Mojahid, Amir L9wafi, Assad Edin, Moro and Islamic Gun (<https://www.facebook.com/KachelaRecords> [Accessed May 10, 2014]).

¹²⁹ “*Bin Zna9i Tanja kanhdar 3la chni wa9e3 bin zna9i Tanja ya3ni, crimi, drog, drari kifach ki ta kital3o l7abss fhamti, ou l7arb bin drari w bin l7wem bin 7awma w 7awma drari kidabzou 3la walou fhamti, l7arb m3a police, jnaka junkies ya3ni, mohim kathdar 3la zan9a, zna9i Tanja kifach 3amline.*”

¹³⁰ “*Bin zna9i Tanja nchof krimi dala3/Bin zna9i Tanja bnadem nlsem bla3/Bin zna9i Tanja bnadem bjou3 chaba3/Bin zna9i Tanja bnadem metbou3 wtaba3.*”

¹³¹ “*Drari testa7laha droga ydilw/Chraab ygeliw 7oma9 yweliw/Bayta ke7la sa7a 9etla lwalida 3a9la khrejla/Fbaloum hadik hiya rojla/Drari chomo seli l3alam wela ychemekr.*”

Another example is the song “Marock”¹³² (2010) performed by Shobee from the group Shayfeen and Yassine from Fez City Clan, which condemns the use of alcohol. There is also Don Bigg’s song “Casanegra” (2009):

His father in law is a drunk/I see you in the bar daily, a glass dropped on your clothes – it seems like/You’ll never go back straight to the path/That’s what he hears from all those who’d been taken by the river/“Well take me to Sweden too,” weed baby/Pass the red joint let him know that today is not Eid (religious feast)/Casa is dark from all sides/dark from the use of hashish and what is said about girls’ backsides/dark for those who wait for their parents to give them money¹³³

As in Muslim’s lyrics, Don Bigg depicts Casablanca’s streets and their hopeless situation. Urban unprivileged youth are represented as physically and mentally wasted, doing nothing except taking drugs or commenting on female bodies. A dark and gloomy representation of the city streets contrasts with the blind expressions of patriotism presented by Don Bigg’s other songs, such as “Mgharba Tal Mout”¹³⁴ (Moroccans Until Death) (2006) “Bladi Blad”¹³⁵ (My Country is a Country) (2006) or “Mabghitch” (2011) (I Don’t Want To).¹³⁶

Although Muslim and Don Bigg employ Tangiers and Casablanca to depict the everyday experiences of the young urban unprivileged, in the song “Zna9i Tanja” this despair is directed towards the Makhzen as the main culprit in creating the

¹³² <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AfWN3ZPIY5s> [Accessed April 11, 2014].

¹³³ “*Rajel mo skayri, hayli hayli/Kanchofk flbar daily kass mekhwi 3la 7wayj - bayn li/Beli ma3amrek maghadi tssegem o tgad/Hadi lhedra li kissme3ha mn ga3 li dahom Lwad/“Wa dini tana l’swid”, weed baby/Dawer jwan l7mer khalih ynssa blli lyom machi l3id/Casa ka7la ghi men terf l terf/Ka7la men jiht l7chich o liygol 3al’bnat tarf/Ka7la li ytssena walidih ydawro lih sarf.*”

¹³⁴ <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4MHTBkEpos8> [Accessed May 10, 2014].

¹³⁵ <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T-M2UIRHq0> [Accessed May 10, 2014].

¹³⁶ While the rapper strongly condemns issues such as poverty, power abuse or corruption in these songs, he also includes lines that attest his love for the nation as proved in Chapters One, Two and Three of this thesis.

situation in the streets of Tangiers. Rapper La-N repeats this narrative in his verse when he insists that “the streets in Tangiers are screwed.”¹³⁷ As rapper La-N explains,

[The political parties] are in a coma/they do not talk about the rights of the citizens/they are marked with the stamp, ‘Made by the Makhzen,’ It’s a long-lasting mark/I use my lyrics to express the complexity of Tangiers/The Makhzen is the first one responsible, with its support of companies of corruption and debauchery and the corrupt stock market.¹³⁸

In these lyrics, the rapper suggests that the Makhzen disempowers the political parties, which are supposed to be elected by the people to represent them and make their life better. Anouar Boukhars argues in the same way that “the problem of democracy in Morocco... is not the lack of free elections but the powerlessness of elected institutions” (2011, p.2). Boukhars suggests in his analysis of the Moroccan political situation that the liberalization of the country’s economy is not linked to a democratic transition (2011, p.5). In other words, neoliberal political changes do not translate into the establishment of democratic rights. This is what rapper La-N wants to convey through his lyrics when he blames the Makhzen’s elitist monopoly of economic interests, which marginalizes peoples’ economic and social rights.

Jamal Bahmad analyzes the movie *Casanegra* (2009) in these same terms claiming that the protagonists, two young Moroccans from Casablanca, “are caught in the vicious web of economic need, social injustices and affective alienation” (2013, p.16). According to Bahmad (Ibid), the city of Casablanca represents the

¹³⁷ “Zan9a f tanja rej3et m9awda.”

¹³⁸ “...fkouma/fkelmet l7a9 katarja3 mabkouma, 7it b gouma ‘Made in lMakhzen,’ da9a zera9a kateb9a f thar mersouma/Kan3aawed nowzen, l3o9da d Tanja/katjbar l’makhzen 2awel wejha methouma, charikat d lkhwad wa fsou9 Borssa mchakhssa 7it tal3a chouma.”

contradictions created by late capitalism, which are especially evident in the youth's frustrations at a time defined by intensive neoliberal economic policies. The neoliberal changes that have been made over the last thirty years have not affected poverty rates in a significant manner. They remain at 18 percent in urban areas (Cohen & Jaidi 2006, p.39). Within a neoliberal global economy, the foreign influence in economic and social changes in the country is also part of the city's problems. In Muslim's song "Tanja for Life"¹³⁹ (Tangiers for Life) (2009), the rapper blames the decadence on unbridled foreign influence:

Tell me Tangiers, why your night became dirty/Tell me, why have your people become disfigured/Tell me, are these girls who got naked your girls? Are these people sleeping in the cold your sons? Tell me why life became difficult for you? Where did safety go and where did chaos come from? Tangiers is the bride of the north/They prettify you with casinos and bars/Busses are coming to you from every land/You got full/You don't recognize your sons from the neighbors' sons anymore/Tangiers these people prettified you for evil.¹⁴⁰

For Muslim, Tangiers is damaged due to the fact that the city has grown and with this change, has become a dirty city, with poverty, alcohol, insecure streets and 'naked' girls. The chorus of the song depicts the contrast between the beauty of the city where he grew up and the awareness that the city has also brought pain: "Where I was born, where I grew up, where I smile, it's always running through my blood, Tangiers for life/where I live, where I die, where I wrote my name with my blood,

¹³⁹ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qRX2QEjDhcg&list=RDqRX2QEjDhcg> [Accessed May 10, 2014].

¹⁴⁰ "ya Tanja 9oli 3lach lilék twesakh/9oli 3lach benadém fik temsakh/9oli had lebnat li t3araw wach benatek/hado li na3sin felbérd wach weladek/9oli 3lach l3icha fik wlat se3iba/fayn mcha l2aman wmayen jatna sayba/Tanja 3arousat chamal/zeynouk b casinos w berane/men kol ard 9esdok lkiran 3marti ya Tanja/mab9iti katmiyez wladek men wlad ljiiran/Tanja had nass zeynouk nelmonkar."

Tangiers for life.”¹⁴¹ Muslim’s aim in this song is to depict his city with a critical eye as he reflects (2013, interview, June 26), for example, in the first verse of the song, “I see you as a damaged rose, I see you as paradise, but impure.”¹⁴²

Despite the decadence of Tangiers, Muslim draws on the history of the city and the northern region as a rebellious region in the song “Tanja for Life” (2009): “Tangiers has a rebellious nature/Even if it gets tough with me I am still its son.”¹⁴³ Despite the hardship for urban youth in Tangiers, the city empowers youth to rebel together by providing a free space to voice the urban unprivileged youth’s frustrations: “I’m free in the cursed streets.”¹⁴⁴ Therefore, even if the changes in the city caused by neoliberal economic politics and the influence of tourism have affected young people negatively in terms of poverty and drug abuse, Muslim claims the freedom and power of youth. This message of agency and resistance is echoed in the song “7ob lWatan”¹⁴⁵ (Love of the Nation) (2009) where Muslim realizes that if one loves one’s country, one should exercise one’s power by standing up to corruption and bringing positive change. As he states in the lyrics: “your country is yours even if you are just drawing it on a map”¹⁴⁶ meaning that Moroccans have to stand up for themselves despite the alienation and marginalization they have experienced. Muslim believes that even if the poor have no voice in the economic and political decisions of the country, they should react to them. Even if people are merely symbolically drawing the country as a map and do not have official representation, they should take charge and claim their rights. In other words, even

¹⁴¹ “*fiha khla9t, fiha kbert, fiha d7ekt, w dayman jarya f demi, Tanja for life/fiha n3ish fiha nmout fiha ktebt bdemi 3la l7yout ismi, Tanja for life.*”

¹⁴² “*kanchofek f7al chi warda me3fousa; kanchofek jena bel7a9 mengousa.*”

¹⁴³ “*Tanja 3anda tebi3a metmerda; wa5a te9sa7 3lia kanb9a welda.*”

¹⁴⁴ “*l7or fzna9i lmen7ousa.*”

¹⁴⁵ <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ExrknaLj8PU> [Accessed May 10, 2014].

¹⁴⁶ “*bladek ya3ni dialek wakha ghir katrassma.*”

though the country is controlled by a small economic and social elite, Muslim urges the people to take it back, to have a voice and stop the aimless plundering of the country: “If you want, you can live in thrall or take up the sword.”¹⁴⁷ Here, he uses the sword as a symbol of action and violence, that is, if Moroccans do not wish to remain repressed, they need to take real action. This real action includes shifting the paradigm from a “country of nightmares,” as he calls it in this song: “The country of nightmares, you got to learn how to dream it/With blood, with tears, you draw a smile.”¹⁴⁸ Thus, Muslim urges people to rebel despite the difficulty of fighting power. In this song, dissent does not mean simply positing the people against the system, but engaging with it to improve it. As suggested by Austin Sarat, “[d]issenters seek to define and occupy an in-between space, resistant to prevailing orthodoxy but engaged with it nonetheless” (2005, p.1). Muslim shows dissent in creating awareness that positive change is possible.

Empowerment of the people is a constant narrative in Muslim’s music. Other songs such as “Machi Ana Likhtart”¹⁴⁹ (It’s Not Me Who Chooses) (2009) also focus on empowering the people to fight poverty and oppression, insisting on the power of the *zanq9a* (the street) in claiming its rights. Muslim’s rap songs are focused on the issue of rallying the masses to take back their country, to stop being the silent majority and take an active part in reforming society. The single “Fine 7a9na”¹⁵⁰ (Where Are our Rights?) (2010) is an important song because it promotes the discourse of change and rebellion. His anger is directed against a corrupt government. Muslim sings in the chorus: “The lost rights of the hungry people; Are

¹⁴⁷ “*ida bghiti 3ich ma7gour wida bghiti hoz sif*.”

¹⁴⁸ “*blad lkawabiss t3alem t7almha; b dem o dmou3 terssam l bessma*.”

¹⁴⁹ http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EEX8u2_HZh8 [Accessed May 10, 2014].

¹⁵⁰ <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PJIOHtlcvp8> [Accessed May 10, 2014].

in the hands of those who sell their conscience/With spirit with blood/With rebellion and revolution/We come to change all the corrupted faces.”¹⁵¹ Muslim declares that he does not want to be on the side of the plunderers of the country or within their dominance: “I want my right not to stay in the pockets of thieves,”¹⁵² referring to the corrupt politicians. Muslim illustrates in his songs the continuous dialectic of economic, social and political struggle.

The postcolonial context of neoliberalism is embodied by Muslim’s performance in *Mawazine* festival in 2012. This event signified the Makhzen’s recognition of Muslim when he was invited to participate in the largest festival of the country,¹⁵³ but it was also an attempt to co-opt him. Besides the political consequences of performing in this festival, such as losing credibility as an independent rapper, Muslim’s performance in *Mawazine* provided an opportunity to reach more fans and to interact with them in a direct way, as rappers do not have many opportunities to organize private concerts, especially those rappers who come from the marginalized north (*Akhbar Alyoum* May 2, 2012). This idea also provides Muslim with a way to evade co-option by arguing that in attracting more audience, it will become more difficult to exclude rap or repress it (Ibid). In examining Muslim’s participation it must stressed that *Mawazine*, as is true also for other festivals such as the *Fez Festival of World Sacred Music* (Belghazi 2006, p.105), is structured hierarchically, as reflected in its use of space. In 2012, *Mawazine* organized four open-air stages and three enclosed smaller performance spaces in

¹⁵¹ “l79o9 day3a d nass l jay3a/fyedin nass li damera bay3a/berou7 bdem/btamarod w tawra/jina nbedlo ga3 loujoh lmzewra.”

¹⁵² “bghit 7a9 mayb9ach fjib lkhawana.”

¹⁵³ *Mawazine* was selected by MTV Iggy as the second biggest music festival in the world gathering around 2.5 million people in 2013, and with some 90 acts and seven stages (<http://www.mtviggy.com/lists/the-10-biggest-music-festivals-in-the-world-2/> [Accessed August 27, 2013]).

Rabat and one other stage in the neighboring city of Salé. This was set up on the beach of Salé and separated from Rabat. The venues were accessible only by small boats crossing the Bouregreg River or by taxi. While international artists, such as Mariah Carey or The Scorpions, performed on the stage located in the rich neighborhood of Souissi, with its own VIP section, the Moroccan rappers were relegated to a rather insignificant and remote location outside Rabat. While Moroccan rappers enjoy the ‘privilege’ of participating in such a festival, they are systematically confined to the margins. Therefore, although rappers are included in the biggest music festival in the country, their potential audience and impact is limited to the geographical and symbolic margins. In this way, the monarchy and the Makhzen are lauded as patrons who support young rappers, while at the same time confining rappers to second-rate stages. This shows young Moroccans that only international artists are to perform on the central stages symbolizing the urban poor’s impossibility of reaching the elite’s spaces.

Nevertheless, Muslim keeps taking advantage of such events to gain an audience and public space in which to perform, thereby aiming to win strategic positions that can empower the unprivileged youth of the country. Muslim’s marginalization by the groups of the secular civil society and much of the Moroccan French language media, exposes not only a North-versus-South marginalization, but class-based power relations between the French educated elite and the urban unprivileged in the North. Muslim’s rap songs reveal not only an understanding of the country’s social and political context, but the rapper’s ability to connect with part of the Moroccan unprivileged youth’s anxieties. Even if Morocco’s diversity may be discussed in terms of ethnicity, religions or languages, Muslim’s discourse on the

nation proves to be more concerned with social inequalities as the main national problem.

Conclusion

Voices of dissent require in-depth analysis that takes into consideration the different agendas of various political and cultural actors. This chapter challenges the civil society groups that capitalize on Moroccan rappers to shape narratives of dissent by representing secularism as a sign of ‘progress’ and democracy. In order for rap discourses to be considered as ‘rebellious’ or ‘revolutionary’ by some academics or some media they must fit with their agendas and display a secular discourse. While Chapter Three focuses on the Makhzen’s role as a cultural patron, this chapter highlights the secular civil society’s role in alternatively promoting and silencing voices with which the urban unprivileged youth relates. In this sense, the depiction of ‘progress’ as secular, however, benefits the Makhzen’s agenda in promoting a liberal, diverse and tolerant Morocco.

Moreover, cultural production is overlooked despite claims of cultural resistance as the case of L7a9ed demonstrates who only received attention from media and researchers after his incarceration. On the contrary, for some national and foreign media and much of the secular civil society, Muslim’s conservatism and lack of struggle with the Makhzen is unexciting compared to L7a9ed despite Muslim’s vast music production in voicing urban youth unprivileged malaises. The fact that L7a9ed’s cultural production had a low impact on the country’s unprivileged youth is trivial for these groups that contribute to perpetuating the division between two of the most powerful groups in the Moroccan opposition: the secular and Islamists. By

promoting the idea of dissent as secular, secularists advocate for their agenda and that of the Makhzen, while silencing voices of dissent that they associated with political Islam. Ignoring Muslim is symptomatic of a struggle for power in which each side ends up silencing the urban unprivileged youth voice and disregarding their agency. Nevertheless, Muslim's strategy of engagement is useful in connecting to the Moroccan youth unprivileged, and in reflecting the country's social, political and economic crisis. Furthermore, Muslim's songs provide evidence that when discourses on the nation trespass on patriotic themes, social differences start to demystify the narrative of national unity as these songs attest to the deep socio-economic divisions within the country. The following chapter addresses further the construction of rebellion and resistance within Moroccan rap. While this chapter calls attention to Muslim's narrative focuses on empowering the marginal urban youth, Chapter Five considers how marginality and cultural resistance has also been used by some Moroccans in diverse manners suggesting the diversity of the Moroccan rap scene. The next chapter suggests that discourses on marginality can fall into cultural clichés, however, they can also be capitalized on to develop creative strategies to engage with local youth.

Chapter Five: Artistic Creativity, Marginality and Cultural Clichés

Moroccan rappers deploy different strategies to gain audience as was the case in the rappers' use of Darija, argued in Chapter Two, to relate to unprivileged urban young people's day-to-day experiences. This chapter adds on to this idea by examining the role of rappers' artistic creativity in connecting with Moroccan youth regardless of the artist's social or political agenda. In this vein, Simon Frith (1996b, p.251) alleges that the music experience is about the aesthetic experience and creative expression as a group, that is, the sharing of feelings and ideas. This creativity, which in rap includes artistic skills as manifested in the quality of rhymes, lyrics, flow, punchlines,¹ and the use of creative language, interesting metaphors and so forth, serves to create a shared music experiences among the bulk of the Moroccan youth who sing and listen to rap music.² This shared experience grants rappers gain of cultural capital, that is, the processes by which cultural texts, practices, and beliefs are granted different values by different social groups (Shuker 1994, p.12). Therefore, this accumulated knowledge, skills and education together with economic, social, and symbolic capital recognize the artist as legitimate and allows him/her to enter the cultural field (Bourdieu 1989, p.17; 1992, p.10).

This chapter turns its focus to the creative strategies of Moroccan rappers in order to engage with their urban youth audience, who are mainly the urban unprivileged though not exclusively. This audience is referred to here as 'the street'

¹ The Oxford English Dictionary defines 'punchline' as "The final phrase or sentence of a joke or story, providing humour or some other crucial element." (http://www.oed.com/search?searchType=dictionary&q=punchline&_searchBtn=Search [Accessed April 22, 2014]).

² As claimed in the introduction chapter, this thesis considers youth is a methodologically useful category representing a socially constructed group that presents a phase between childhood and adulthood (Simonsen 2005, p.7; Herrera & Bayat 2010, p.6).

or *zanqa* in Arabic and it functions as the source of a different kind of knowledge, one that highlights youth experiences as a social group. The street in hip hop culture is not only a location from which to express despair and protest, as Asef Bayat argues when dealing with the Middle East political street (2010, p.12), but a habitus, a system that forms “principles which generate and organize practices and representations” (Bourdieu cited in Skott-Myhre & Richardson 2012, p.9). In the case of the Moroccan street, it is the public arena where rappers’ work is discussed, organized, challenged and ultimately bestowed with cultural and symbolic capital.

The rappers’ accumulation of capital in its various forms, as claimed in Chapter Three and Four, is related to the power of the state in the field, as well as the influence of sections of the secular civil society and the repercussion of rappers’ actions in the media. This chapter builds up on these previous chapters to reflect on the role of the street and the appeal to international media in shaping the Moroccan cultural field. For this reason, the first section of this chapter explores the role of international music market and media that capitalizes and promotes on this global youth sense of despair, particularly when it comes to non-European and non-US artists. This section examines the contribution of the media in shaping the ‘authentic’ non-Western rapper. Within this rubric, the ‘authentic’ rapper is constructed through a sense of social, political or economic marginality. Moroccan rappers are aware of the international cache of expressions of marginality and, as the second section of this chapter considers, some Moroccan rappers have capitalized on this scenario. The second section goes on to present the case of Chaht Man, as an example that shows how the Moroccan rap music scene is shaped by the global music market to present it as the music of political and social dissent and of the excluded. However, Moroccan

young rap audience, that is, the street, do ask that rappers be engaged further than repeating a series of cultural clichés in lyrics and performance on marginality and oppression. Therefore, while Chaht Man has constructed himself as a rebellious rapper employing ‘radical’³ political lyrics to present himself as engaged, he is ultimately perceived as ‘inauthentic’ by the street because his inability to accumulate cultural capital and hence to connect with local conditions.

The third section of this chapter will then examine Dizzy DROS’ creative strategy of engaging with Moroccan urban youth’s marginality. One of the main narrative threads with which the ‘street’ and youth are able to relate globally is the feeling of social exclusion. As argued in the introduction to this thesis, youth itself is status that discursively represents the construction of a large part the population, often in tension with adults, who are perceived as the ruling authorities (Osumare 2007, pp.71–72). Therefore, in Morocco, while not all rappers or rap audience members necessarily belong to the urban unprivileged, marginality, – whether this involves class, ‘race,’ and/or gender – is what primarily connects Moroccan rappers to a sense of despair felt by global youth. The creative strategy of Dizzy DROS to relate Moroccan youth’s sense of marginality to the global youth is to express it through the notion of ‘blackness.’⁴ In order to relate to social inequalities, Dizzy DROS’ songs reshape a derogative word in Darija to refer to Black people in Morocco into a ‘trendy’ word to name himself, his friends, his audience and urban unprivileged youth in general. The fourth section then presents a third case, and looks at Mobydick, a rapper that is inspired from a myriad of popular culture

³ ‘Radical’ political lyrics indicates lyrics that convey social and political analysis and protest. Section two of this chapter will dwell on what constitutes ‘radical’ in the Moroccan context.

⁴ The notion of ‘blackness’ as a symbol of marginality will be further explained in the third section of this chapter.

references to transform marginal urban youth into an empowered group. The rapper's strategies of reshaping narratives of marginality include the use of cartoons, video clip characters, singers or sportsmen. Both Dizzy DROS and Mobydick include in their music narrative the aim of transforming derogative words in Darija that directly signal youth marginality into signifiers of empowered youth. Ultimately, this chapter argues for the importance of deploying artistic creativity in order for rappers to engage with the marginalized local youth.

1. Marketing Moroccan Rappers

In postcolonial Morocco, hip hop culture is related not only to local and national identifiers, but also to the politics of global cultural flows.⁵ These politics are often used by the international media to market, homogenize and essentialize African and MENA region's youth culture, as Carolyn Mose (2013, p.249) claims, as a merely 'protest' youth culture that voices the urban underprivileged and oppressed classes. The influence of these international media outlets that constantly focus and construct Moroccan rappers as dissenting youth has made this artists aware of the ways in which they can call the attention of the international media with the hope of gaining symbolic capital within the Moroccan cultural field.

Marketing Moroccan rappers –as well as the rest of Africa and the MENA region– as angry, oppressed youth mainly concern with 'protest' culture has come out most recently through the media's narrative of MENA uprisings in 2011. During the popular outburst in the region, rappers and the region's youth have been presented as a homogenous group that give voice to political and social problems and

⁵ See the section four "Moroccanness and Global Flows" in Chapter One.

support pro-democracy movements across the Arabic-speaking region. The French newspaper *Le Monde* (January 11, 2011), as one example of the international media writing in this vein, published an article called “Le rap, porte-parole de la jeunesse Tunisienne”⁶ (Rap, the *Porte-Parole* of Tunisian Youth). The article explicitly pointed out rap as the music of the revolution. By claiming simplistically that Tunisian rap groups such as Armada Bizerta or rapper Hamada Ben Amor (aka El General) reflect the social and political situation in Tunisia under Ben Ali’s regime, the article positions the diverse voices and music production of many rappers into a single category. In addition, the article fails to provide evidence at the local music level that would substantiate their claims as it proclaims rappers as porte-parole without providing evidence that rap in Tunisia is a powerful and singular voice amidst a heterogeneous youth. Articles in international publications such as *Time* (February 15, 2011),⁷ *Time Magazine* (February 17, 2011),⁸ *The Guardian* (February 27, 2011),⁹ *Muftah* (May 28, 2011),¹⁰ *BBC News* (July 24, 2011),¹¹ *The Nation* (August 27, 2011)¹² have all promoted also the idea that rap is the music of the MENA uprisings, describing it in the same words as the world music market, as the music of anger and frustration. *The Nation*’s August 27, 2011¹³ article started by describing the El General song “Rais Lebled”¹⁴ (President of the Country) (2010), a

⁶ http://www.lemonde.fr/afrique/article/2011/01/11/le-rap-porte-parole-de-la-jeunesse-tunisienne_1463638_3212.html [Accessed May 2, 2014].

⁷ <http://www.time.com/time/world/article/0,8599,2049456,00.html> [Accessed April 28, 2014].

⁸ <http://content.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,2050022,00.html> [Accessed April 28, 2014].

⁹ <http://www.guardian.co.uk/music/2011/feb/27/egypt-tunisia-music-protests> [Accessed April 28, 2014].

¹⁰ <http://muftah.org/rapping-the-revolution/> [Accessed April 28, 2014].

¹¹ <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-14146243> [Accessed April 28, 2014].

¹² <http://www.thenational.ae/arts-culture/music/a-song-to-start-something-the-arab-springs-greatest-hits> [Accessed April 28, 2014].

¹³ <http://www.thenational.ae/arts-culture/music/a-song-to-start-something-the-arab-springs-greatest-hits> [Accessed April 28, 2014].

¹⁴ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=29rv2N3WVTE> [Accessed April 28, 2014].

song for which he was arrested, as one that “seethes with disappointment, with anger, with frustration, with all the emotions.” *Time Magazine*’s February 17, 2011¹⁵ article directly connects anger, rap, revolution, and Arab youth in its title: “Rage, Rap and Revolution: Inside the Arab Youth Quake.” The portrayal of an enraged Arab youth was later repeated by *The Guardian* (February 27, 2011)¹⁶ with the title “From Fear to Fury: How the Arab World Found Its Voice.” These articles, often citing the lyrics of El General, underscore the political lyrics of rappers’ from the region and overlook the individual artists’ local cultural capital or their connection to and repercussion within the local or national art scene. Though these uprisings certainly awoke feelings of anger and despair, the media overlooked the heterogeneity of the region’s youth in terms of nationality, urban or rural, gender, class, education and so forth.

Timothy Taylor’s (2004) insight in discussing the notion of ‘world music’ strategically helps in the analysis of the relationship between Moroccan rappers and the international media even if the category of ‘world music’¹⁷ is highly complex and is much debated within academia. Taylor (2004, pp.66–67) argues that it is linked to the music of oppressed groups – for example, urban African American hip hop music– which have shown to be economically successful. According to Taylor, the music industry considers the following part of the ‘world music’ scene: people of color from European and American countries, singers with political lyrics that signify anger associated with oppressed groups, hybrid music – such as fusion or

¹⁵ <http://content.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,2050022,00.html> [Accessed April 28, 2014].

¹⁶ <http://www.guardian.co.uk/music/2011/feb/27/egypt-tunisia-music-protests> [Accessed April 28, 2014].

¹⁷ See note 27 on page 40.

taqlidi (traditional) rap—, and music genres related to urban spaces such as rap. Taylor observes that these characteristics are perhaps most often found in rap music; even if not all ‘world music’ is rap. Yet, Taylor’s insight omits the fact that ‘global hip hop’ is mostly discarded and not marketed as ‘world music’ as it often lack of the ‘exoticism’ which this market is searching for. In the case of Morocco, a group such as Fnaïre currently markets itself as ‘world music’ due to the fact that its taqlidi rap musically fits in with the demanded ‘exotic’ sounds. However, the vast majority of Moroccan rappers are discarded due to their lack of Arabic or local sounds in their beats.

Even if Moroccan rappers are not ‘exotic’ enough for the international music market, Taylor’s insight reflects how non-Western rappers are marketed in international media outlets. At the same time, Moroccan rappers gather cultural capital within the international media according to their capacity to express anger and oppression in their music production. However, the same set of priorities does not necessarily describe the case for accumulating capital among local audiences in Morocco. One can argue that in Morocco, rap serves MENA region’s youth to express similar feelings of despair than during the 1970s in the neighborhoods of Harlem and Bronx. The ‘authentic’ rapper therefore is related to the genre’s origin as Philip Bohlman (1988, p.10) as a product of Black and Latino youth sense of oppression in marginalized neighborhoods of New York. The ‘authentic’ Moroccan rapper, however, is also related to the ‘honesty’ of the experience (Grossberg, cited in Moore 2002, p.213) in as much he/she demonstrates to live this kind of experiences. Yet, ‘purity’ and ‘honesty’ are only considered among the local audiences as the international media or the ‘world music’ market is not interested in

local, but on ‘Western’ audiences. The international media tends to disregard rappers’ local and national cultural capital, that is, the aesthetics value of their music, their skills as rappers, and the relationship of the rappers to their local audience. Steven Feld claims that the field of ‘world music’ often alternates between “interesting art even if lousy politics [and] interesting politics even if lousy art” (1995, p.96). In the case of Moroccan rap, the field of ‘world music’ overlooks the aesthetic value of the music as long as lyrics and performance express oppression and marginality.

Even if there is real anger that comes out of oppressed groups, the music market privileges what Taylor calls the ‘positional’ value over music aesthetics and creativity:

If the musician in question is heard to possess an anger that is reasonably consistent with the modality of subaltern anger sanctioned by the music industry – best, but not only, exemplified by the sounds of rap music – then, regardless of the aesthetic values or quality of the music or the musical professionalism exhibited, that musician stands a chance of being noticed by the music industry. Values that we could call positional – that are concerned with the musician and her culture – prevail over the aesthetic, over musical inventiveness and professionalism. (Taylor 2004, p.70)

Artistic creativity, skill or aesthetics of the music is not significant for the global music market as long as the artist portrays an angry and hopeless image. Therefore, as Todd Boyd (2004, p.327) argues, radical political lyrics must be analyzed together with the demands of the market and the circulation of music to determine whether they engage with the audience, they are a product of consumption or both although this last option is often looked with skepticism (Baker 2005, p.381). As above stated, some media reflects the market’s consumption of ‘world music’ by focusing in the

artist's positional value. This was seen in particular in the case of L7a9ed's work in Chapter Four, as many of the media's accounts on the rapper focused on his imprisonment and not on the creativity and aesthetic value of his music or its impact on Moroccan youth. Just as the global music market, international media valued L7a9ed's work on the basis on his representation of oppressed, poor, and young Moroccans. Therefore, in order for the global market and international media to look at Moroccan rappers, these rappers must create lyrics which revolve around oppression, marginality and anger.

Contrary to the global music market and international media, however, the Moroccan street bestows cultural capital on rappers according to their ability to create rhymes and lyrics, perform with a good rhythm or flow, produce powerful beats for the songs, and come up with creative punchlines that evidence their creativity. This particular landscape determines the success of rappers' productions in terms of winning legitimacy and "external or specific profits (such as literary prestige) which are at stake in the field" (Bourdieu 1993, p.30). The artist's success in the field is related to gathering cultural capital, but also symbolic and economic. In *Distinction* (1984), Pierre Bourdieu defines symbolic capital as: "[T]he acquisition of a reputation for competence and an image of respectability and honorability that are easily converted into political positions as a local or national *notable*" (Bourdieu 1984, p.291). The idea of symbolic capital is concretized in hip hop through the notion of 'street credibility' which is related to the rapper's 'authenticity' (Alim 2006, p.85; Harrison 2009, p.68). Street credibility is the amount of cultural capital bestowed by the audience and peers to the rapper in order for him or her to be legitimated as 'authentic.' Therefore, the audience is the one that bestows the rapper

with symbolic capital deciding whether the rapper is able to relate with the youth's social reality or not in a skillful manner. This street credibility in hip hop grants you a reputation of being a skilled rapper that reflects the social reality in a way in which the audience can relate to. Street credibility is granted locally according to the accumulated cultural capital, which is subject to change depending on the different contexts. Bob White (2011, p.71) argues, for example, that besides microphone skills, rappers in the US may gain their street credibility by engaging in violence. Morocco presents a different social context where urban violence is not associated with the rap scene. Indeed, during research (2010-2014) and fieldwork (2011-2013) I did not find any event that related rappers to urban or any other kind of violence. Themes of violence came up in my interview with Muslim, who clearly stated, "we [Moroccan rappers] don't support violence" (Muslim 2013, interview, June 26). Rather, the 'authentic' Moroccan rapper is not necessarily constructed in the same terms as that of rappers from other local or national rap scenes.

Gaining street credibility is intimately connected with the notion in hip hop of 'keepin' it real' (Basu 1998, p.372). The concept, related to artists' 'credibility' and 'authenticity,' also underscores the 'honesty' and ability of the rapper to be true to the street (M. White 2011, pp.106–107). This willingness to deal with Black urban experiences and street life is mediated in US hip hop culture by highlighting concepts of 'authenticity' and 'realness' (Baldwin 2004, p.160; Boyd 2004, p.326). This 'honesty' and 'truth' to the street depends on the lived experiences of the artists (Basu 1998, p.372). In narrating their everyday experiences, 'keeping it real' is enacted not only in telling the truth about street life, but is also performed, for example, by wearing on stage the same clothes that they would wear on the street

(Rose 2008, p.38). In this sense, Tricia Rose defines ‘keepin’ it real’ as talking openly “about undesirable or hard-to-hear truths about black urban street life” (2008, p.134).

Moroccan rappers have used the term ‘truth’ (*vrai* in French or *waqi’a* in Arabic) to articulate the idea of ‘keepin’ it real.’ As the Moroccan rap group Mot de Passe explained in *I Love Hip Hop in Morocco* (2007): “rap is saying the truth.” Don Bigg also claims that rapping in Darija is the tool to “speak the truth to all”¹⁸ (Caubet 2005, p.239). Don Bigg emphasizes the importance of real talk as he puts it: “I use the way youth talk to tell the truth. I express my deep thoughts and theirs. I shout out on stage what Moroccans are thinking”¹⁹ (Caubet, 2005:238-239). In Don Bigg’s statement, the ‘truth’ expresses not only his deepest thoughts, but also his value as a rapper representing Moroccan youth. For Bigg, the claim of ‘keepin’ it real’ or ‘*parler vrai*’ is an artistic claim of engagement with the world that surrounds him. Yet, the fact that Don Bigg is perceived as co-opted (as Chapters Two and Three showed) questions the claim that he in fact represents youth. In order to assess these claims, rappers must be contextualized within their local field as way to acknowledge the fact that despite claims to the contrary, Don Bigg gradually lost his ‘street credibility.’

The idea of expressing the ‘truth’ is behind rapper Muslim’s line in the song “Aka Moutamarred”²⁰ (Aka the Rebellious) (2009): “My voice reaches every Moroccan/Rap is not my life, rap becomes my death/I can reach the hearts of people

¹⁸ “*parler vrai a tous.*”

¹⁹ “*J’utilise la façon de parler des jeunes pour parler vrai. J’exprime ainsi le fond de ma pensée et la leur. Je crie haut sur scène ce que le Marocains pensent tous bas.*”

²⁰ <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CgfxLQ9tJL0> [Accessed May 21, 2014].

because they reach my heart/I only write the reality and reality is not a sin.”²¹ These dramatic lines see the rapper pronounce that rap’s narration of the hardship of everyday life allows him to reach the audience. Rap is thus seen as requiring a deep connection between the artists and the audience. Unlike Don Bigg, Muslim largely maintains his ‘street credibility’ thanks to the marginalization he experienced at the hands of the Makhzen and groups of the secular civil society (See Chapter Four, sections three and four). Within the field of Moroccan rap, it can be said that Muslim’s idea of ‘truth’ and ‘reality’ gather more respect from the street. Later in “Aka Moutamarred,” Muslim, as Don Bigg before him, claims that he gives voice to the anxieties of young people: “When I started I knew that rap is not a game/I found myself representing people/I found myself responsible for this generation.”²² Muslim considers it import to take rap as a serious tool for change, as he claims in the chorus: “My rap is a revolution not a game.”²³

Artists like Don Bigg and Muslim aim to express their actions, feelings, or views, as real and ‘authentic,’ and work to show that their music represents them in an honest way (Middleton 2006, pp.205–206). Authenticity then is related to life experience not only of the artist, but the group it belongs to: “[A]rtists speak the truth of their own situation... they speak the truth of the situation of (absent) others; and... they speak the truth of their own culture, thereby representing (presenting) others” (Moore 2002, p.209). Telling and performing personal stories in a truthful manner, or ‘keeping it real,’ gives rappers street credibility and thus the respect of the group. The argument in this section is thus that ‘truth’ or ‘authenticity’ in

²¹ “*ay maghribi wsalou sawti/rap machi 7yati, rap wla mawti/9dart newsal n 9loub nas/7it houma weslou n 9albi/ktebt ghir lwa9i3 w lwa9i3 machi denbi.*”

²² “*mli bdit kont 3aref rap machi la3b/jbart rasi kanmtel cha3b/jbart rasi mes2ouL 3la jil.*”

²³ “*rap dyali tawra machi ghi la3b.*”

Moroccan rap is shaped by the Moroccan cultural field and the wider global market. Examining the market in which Moroccan rap circulates is therefore essential to a nuanced understanding of rappers' musical production. One can claim that Moroccan rappers acknowledge the global and local politics of music circulation and their markets. In the song "Aka Moutamarred," Muslim acknowledges the implications of the local and international music market on his own music production. Muslim considers that while rappers need money to continue their work, wealth can turn into the only aim of the artist: "Money is just to add energy/Money is just a way, but rap is the goal/And if it is vice versa then rap becomes a project."²⁴ The lyrics ask listeners to consider the construction of 'authenticity' and the narration of the 'real' unprivileged youth who live in urban centers. The implication is that this sort of consideration requires not only the acknowledgement of the street, but also the politics of the music industry (Taylor 2004, p.67). In contemporary Morocco, therefore, 'keepin' it real' is related to the local, everyday life of urban unprivileged youth, but also to the demands of the global music market.

The following section suggests that when rappers only consider the demands of the market – exploiting anger and marginality in order to sell globally and locally – their production emerges as empty, replete only with cultural clichés. Even if the rapper reproduces 'radical' politically engaged lyrics, when these fail to resonate with the life of urban youth it generates the rapper's loss of symbolic capital or street credibility to use in hip hop terms. The rappers' radical lyrical engagement becomes unconvincing and the artists are perceived as 'inauthentic.' The following section

²⁴ "wl3a9a gher bach nzido fta9a/flous gher wasila w rap howa lghaya/wida t9lbet l2aya w rap wla mechrrou3."

examines one example of this dynamic, in the form of rapper Chaht Man's narrative of revolution.

2. Locating Cultural Clichés

Rap outside the US is often presented as the 'authentic' form of conscious rap (Terkourafi 2010, p.3). The appeal of revolution has been used in Cuban hip hop where – as Baker (2005) argues – revolutionary rap has been a rhetorical strategy for many local groups. In Baker's article "¡Hip Hop, Revolución! Nationalizing Rap in Cuba" (2005), he argues that revolutionary rap has provoked certain skepticism due to the success of the groups who make use of it (2005, p.381). An editorial in *The Economist* claimed, when criticizing Ice Cube, member of the rap group NWA, that "in rap as in rock, rebellion sells" (cited in Chang 2005, p.341). Nevertheless, revolution remains central in some of the 'conscious' rappers in US rap groups such as Public Enemy or Dead Prez, as Baker points out. Therefore, he continues, Cuban revolutionary rap has also been constructed as "an 'authentic' movement harking back to the genre's original spirit" (Ibid, p.382).

This section presents the case of rapper Chaht Man as it exemplifies how some rapper construct themselves as socially and politically engaged artists in order to gain street credibility. I present Chaht Man as a case where despite his reproval of the countries social and political malaises, he has not been able to establish profound links with the audience and thus has not gained street credibility. In Morocco, credibility requires the rapper to go beyond radical political lyrics and accumulate cultural capital bestowed by the local audience. Rapper Chaht Man's music production has capitalized on the demands of media and 'world music,' in particular

the construction of African and Middle Eastern rappers' as young, unprivileged, angry and politically oppressed subjects, to gain symbolic, economic and cultural capital. The case of this rapper shows how rappers in Morocco are aware of the politics of the cultural field. This section argues that despite Chaht Man's aim to present himself as a revolutionary artist, his message has had a low impact in the field due to his failure to gain street credibility and the lack of aesthetic and creative value in his music.

Chaht Man is a member of a popular group from Casablanca, Casa Crew, formed in 2003 following the participation of its members in the music festival *L'Boulevard des Jeunes Musiciens*.²⁵ After Casa Crew produced its second album *Al Basma* (The Print) (2007), its members (Masta Flow, J-OK, Mc Caprice and Chaht Man) started independent careers as solo artists. On his own, Chaht Man shaped his artistic persona the new pseudonym *athawri* (the revolutionary) or as he writes it and closer to the Darija pronunciation *attawri*.²⁶ However, after being highly criticized for calling himself the revolutionary but not acting as such, Chaht Man changed its artistic moniker to *L'9bi7* (the ugly). Chaht Man established a 'rebellious' image after releasing his first solo album called *Attawri* (The Revolutionary) in 2010 and two years later the album *Ana 7or* (I'm Free) in 2012. In his songs, Chaht Man claims to be enraged and to be a fighter for social justice particularly against the Makhzen (*TelQuel* January 28, 2012).²⁷ The lyrics for the song on the first album,

²⁵ <http://www.hitradio.ma/musique/artistes/casa-crew/> [Accessed April 28, 2014]; <http://qgprod.com/artist/cha7t-man/> [Accessed April 28, 2014].

²⁶ I follow Chaht Man's transliteration of his moniker, title of the album and song in Latin alphabet for *athawri* as *attawri*.

²⁷ <http://www.telquel-online.com/content/rap-my-people> [Accessed April 21, 2014].

“Attawri”²⁸ (2010), connect the idea of revolution to social inequities in Morocco, blaming the nation’s politicians for the poor state of affairs. In the song, Chaht Man questions the narrative of the artistic revolution of formulated under the notion of Nayda as argued in Chapter Four section one: “And you say 2010 Nayda?”²⁹ In these lines, Chaht Man criticizes the romantic image of youth in the Nayda Movement during the first years of the reign of Mohammed VI. As Chaht Man claims in “Attawri,” instead of hope and winds of democratic changes, he still sees angry people living in fear in 2010: “Why is the system is not going straight today/Why are people sleeping and quiet today/People are closing their hearts and living scared/People are angry that’s why they called me revolutionary.”³⁰ The rapper claims that a cultural revolution in Morocco did not start with Nayda, but earlier with the struggle for independence: “I became a revolutionary because I inherited it from my grandparents.”³¹ Chaht Man links the notion of revolution to Morocco’s legacy of resistance against French colonial rule and the years of the repressive rule associated with former King Hassan II.

Chaht Man creates his revolutionary persona by associating himself with these diverse personalities from Morocco’s past, and reinforces his rebellious spirit by denouncing those associated with what came to be known as the Lead Years of Hassan II. Chaht Man claims he became a revolutionary via connection with Moroccan characters of dissent such as Mehdi Ben Barka, and Abdelkrim Al Khattabi: “I became a revolutionary because Ben Barka and Allal are in my blood/I

²⁸<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zCUc0TSsflk&list=PLEB1A14210D854767&index=12&feature=plcp> [Accessed April 21, 2014].

²⁹ “*Wigoul 2010 Nayda?*”

³⁰ “*Mal system lyouma ghadi daykh mrouwen/Mal cha3b lyouma ghafel ghir mkouwen/Bnadem sakat katem 9albo 3aych mzarri/Bnadem na9em ka3i 7ta smmawni tawri.*”

³¹ “*Wllit tawri 7it wrett tawra men jdoudi.*”

became a revolutionary because Abdelkrim Al Khattabi is revolutionary.”³² These national figures are significant political activists in different historical periods. Mehdi Ben Barka was an activist and dissident leftist in the 1960s during Hassan II’s iron grip on power; he disappeared and was assassinated in Paris in October 1965 on the order of General Mohammed Oufkir (Storm 2007, p.27). Allal Ben Abdellah is considered a hero of Moroccan anti-colonial resistance against the French, who was killed in 1953.³³ The famous singer Setati dedicated a song to Allal Ben Abdellah popularizing his story in Moroccan collective memory.³⁴ Chaht Man’s mention of Abdelkrim Al Khattabi, on the other hand, is surprising, as Al Khattabi is considered to have challenged the Moroccan monarchy in his struggle during the Rif Wars (1919-26) against Spanish colonial power during an attempt to establish the Republic of the Rif (Howe 2005, p.66; Leveau 1997, p.105). Even if Al Khattabi is a symbol of the Amazigh resistance, however, in recent articles of the magazine *Zamane*, the Rif leader is presented as a patriotic anti-colonial revolutionary leader³⁵ who had collaborated with Spanish colonial rule.³⁶ This double consideration can be seen as an attempt to smear Al Khattabi’s reputation as one of the most significant heroes of Morocco, who has yet to be recognized officially by the state.

In “Attawri,” Chaht Man also mentions Driss El Basri, the fearsome long-time Interior Minister under Hassan II. El Basri was dismissed when Mohammed VI came to power in an attempt to break with the repressive past of Hassan II’s reign

³² “*Wllit tawri 7it Ben Barka w 3ellal f demmi/Wllit tawri 7it Abdelkrim Al khattabi tawri.*”

³³ http://www.lematin.ma/express/Resistance_Commemoration-de-la-disparition-de-Allal-Ben-Abdellah/171304.html [Accessed April 14, 2014].

³⁴ https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=v0hTr90e9_A [Accessed April 22, 2014].

³⁵ <http://www.zamane.ma/abdelkrim-el-khattabi-na-jamais-ete-secessionniste/> [Accessed April 21, 2014].

³⁶ <http://www.zamane.ma/vrai-la-famille-el-khattabi-a-collabore-avec-les-espagnols/> [Accessed April 21, 2014].

(Storm 2007, p.38). Chaht Man blames Driss El Basri for anaesthetizing the population with drugs instead of providing them with education: “Al-Basri said we have to apply the policy of stupidity/To give people less knowledge, seems like they want to arrive at Mars/Give them hashish, drugs and heroin/Give them pills, beers and cocaine.”³⁷ Moroccan rappers often explicitly mention important characters from contemporary national politics including El Basri or Abbas El Fassi Fihri, a member of the Istiqlal Party and Morocco’s prime minister from 2007 to 2011. El Fassi, however, has also been criticized for nepotism after members of this family were appointed to numerous positions in the government and have been closely linked to the monarchy (Maghraoui 2011, p.688). The Fassi family and government were targeted during the demonstrations of the M20F in 2011. This kind of criticism remains within the Makhzen’s accepted ‘oppositional’ discourse or accepted criticism that still does not cross the country’s ‘red lines’ (*Jadaliyya* July 31, 2012).³⁸ Criticism directed at the Fassi family allows activists or rappers to direct their frustration towards members of previous governments but without crossing the country’s red lines and criticizing the current leadership. Both, Al-Basri and Fassi Fihri are mentioned in other rap songs such as “Bladi Blad”³⁹ (My Country is a Country) by Don Big and Alfaress; “Checkmate”⁴⁰ (2011) a freestyle song by Mobydick; “Msa7a Fia”⁴¹ (You Can Blame It On Me) (2012) also a freestyle song by Dizzy DROS.

³⁷ “*Gal L’Basri khassna nkhadmo syassat taklikh/Na9sso 9raya na9sso draya hadou bghaw ywasslo l’Marikh/Hako 7chich hako chira w zid lhéroin/Hako 9a9a hako birra zid kokain.*”

³⁸ http://www.jadaliyya.com/pages/index/6653/dissent-in-morocco_not-all-for-one [Accessed May 22, 2014].

³⁹ <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T-M2UIRHq0> [Accessed April 23, 2014].

⁴⁰ <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VxagfDYjHS4> [Accessed April 23, 2014].

⁴¹ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bYkR4zBnAMk> [Accessed April 23, 2014].

The song “Attawri” also addresses the hardship of life and social inequities in the country. This is reflected in its mentions of the uprisings in 1981 when people protested the high cost of living and unemployment (Hammoudi 1997, p.21). Chaht Man further emphasizes the difference between the rich and the poor by illustrating a country governed by the elite bourgeoisie. As the rapper claims, important surnames like Bennani, Bennis or ‘Amrani represent only the privileged minority: “I am no Bennani, I am no Bennis/I am no L3amrani, these are surnames that play that ‘play 10’/I am the suffering one, I am the angry one/I am the one who takes the bus, I left you the Mercedes.”⁴² In order to depict social roles, Chaht Man employs the football image “play 10,” used in Morocco to refer to those who play main the main political, social, economic, cultural roles in the country. Moreover, Chaht Man portrays angry poor people deprived of the possibility of economic success because of their surnames or low social class.

In spite of the political lyrics Chaht Man used in “Attawri,” his music has failed to evoke a politically rebellious identity. This is partly because in several of his video clips he is shown consuming alcohol and with women dancing in mini-skirts or shorts. While the rapper criticizes the former prime minister El Basri for allowing the use of drugs and alcohol in the country, in the song “00h Casablanca”⁴³ (2012) Chaht Man appears holding two bottles of alcoholic drinks. Even if this song focuses on showing the city of Casablanca by night, the rapper does not directly condemn alcohol. In Moroccan rap songs, drinking alcohol is not perceived as part of a rebellious attitude but normally portrayed in negative terms associated to

⁴² “*Machi ana Bennani, machi ana Bennis/Machi ana L3amrani, al9ab la3ba 10/Ana li cheb3an tkarfiss, ana li cheb3an f9ays/Ana li ghadi f tobis khallit lk l’Mercedes.*”

⁴³ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=m4l3gy5HBxQ> [Accessed April 29, 2014].

alcoholism or the moral deviances of the upper classes as in the single “Marock”⁴⁴ (2013), a collaboration of rapper Yassine from the Fez City Clan and Shobee from Shayfeen; or as a social problem of the unprivileged as in Don Bigg’s “Casanegra”⁴⁵ (2009); or in Muslim’s “Tanja for Life”⁴⁶ (2009), as a consequence of foreign influence.⁴⁷



Figure 22. Chat Man's name on woman's leg

⁴⁴ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AfWN3ZPIY5s> [Accessed April 29, 2014].

⁴⁵ <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=67-EvFBDYOo> [Accessed April 29, 2014].

⁴⁶ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qRX2QEjDhcg&list=RDqRX2QEjDhcg> [Accessed May 22, 2014].

⁴⁷ Exceptions to this are rappers Mobydick or the crew Bizzmakers from Casablanca that have also used alcohol in their clips to challenge this social perceptions. For example, Bizzmakers in their freestyle song “B.M.W” (2013) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JhpdCGrfAuw> [Accessed April 29, 2014].

Chaht Man's street credibility as an 'authentic' rebel is also questioned in his use of the sexualized female bodies.⁴⁸ Even if alcohol features in Moroccan rappers' cultural production, this is not the case with over-sexualized women such as in Chaht Man's clip "F.Y"⁴⁹ (2012) or "00h Casablanca"⁵⁰ (2012). In a picture to promote his single "Mizi Drahem Ikhourjou Lik Ikwari"⁵¹ (Insert Dirhams and The Balls Will Come Out) (2012), Chaht Man's name appears drawn on a woman's leg [Figure 22].⁵² At the same time, the rapper has used the calligram of his moniker *attawri* as a trademark which he uses in most of his clips and pictures where the rapper appears with the logo printed in t-shirts or tracksuits as in the video clip of his track "F.Y"⁵³ (2012) [Figure 23]. The calligram not only appears on the rapper's clothes, but also on t-shirts worn by dancers, rappers or other characters in the video clips including in "Attawri"⁵⁴ (2012), "Dima Classic"⁵⁵ (Always Classic) (2012) or "CCTV"⁵⁶ (2012). In this sense, the problem in Morocco of constructing a politically engaged rapper as one that also employs scantily-clad women dancing in videos – contrary to the US rap (Watkins 2005, p.210) – caused Chaht Man to lose his credibility.

⁴⁸ As Chapter Four section three evidences, women are present in Moroccan rapper's songs. While men rappers dedicate songs to their mother's such as Don Bigg or Muslim, rapper Soultana or Tendresse have songs that deal with the position of women in Morocco.

⁴⁹ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UMrMKEmhoos&list=PLEB1A14210D854767&index=7&feature=plcp> [Accessed April 21, 2014].

⁵⁰ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=m4l3gy5HBxQ> [Accessed May 22, 2014].

⁵¹ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TknTM8OHxII> [Accessed May 22, 2014].

⁵² This calligram that is also tattooed in Chaht Man's arm.

⁵³ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UMrMKEmhoos&list=PLEB1A14210D854767&index=7&feature=plcp> [Accessed April 21, 2014].

⁵⁴ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zCUc0TSsflk&list=PLEB1A14210D854767&index=12&feature=plcp> [Accessed April 21, 2014].

⁵⁵ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5biebxgz78A&list=PLEB1A14210D854767&index=13&feature=plcp> [Accessed April 21, 2014].

⁵⁶ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TzBcrb2l1Ss&list=PLEB1A14210D854767&index=8&feature=plcp> [Accessed April 21, 2014].



Figure 23. Snapshot of the video clip "F.U" (2012)

The bulk of Moroccan rap songs and video clip do not make use of female bodies in this manner as well as many of the young MCs of the region (El Zein 2012, p.5). The use of the women's bodies in Chaht Man's video clip present him as disrespectful of Moroccan cultural norms, but also betrays the general attitude of respect by rappers of the MENA region towards women's bodies. The absence of sexualized women in Moroccan or Arabic rap is not necessarily indicative of gender equality in these music scenes. However, it denotes that rap in the region is more concerned with the everyday lives of urban youth, tackling social inequities and political corruption, but also on presenting a creative and aesthetic value that does not revolve merely around sexualized women even if gender issues do come through in some of the texts and video clips.

Chaht Man also employs swear words and his clips are prefaced with age-appropriateness warnings to emphasize his angry rebellious persona. At the beginning of “00h Casablanca”⁵⁷ (2012), Chaht Man includes a warning of age appropriateness⁵⁸ noting that the song is not recommended for people under 16 years of age. Moroccan law, however, does not set out standards for swear words beyond a direct prohibition.⁵⁹ His warning, which is often also added by US rappers, is a cosmetic act of self-censure in Chaht Man’s construction of the ‘authentic’ rebel going beyond the limits of socially and legally acceptable norms.⁶⁰ Chaht Man also capitalizes on the connection between swearwords and anger (Abdel-Jawad 2000, p.217). He appears in video clips showing his middle finger,⁶¹ including “F.Y.”⁶² (2013), the title of which stands for “Fuck You.” Even though they are banned, the use of swearwords, especially in English, is not rare in Moroccan rap. Rappers like Don Bigg, Muslim and Mobydick employ swearwords such as “fuck” in their lyrics to manifest their rebelliousness in the sphere of rap music and hip hop culture. In this sense, while swearwords are part of the field of Moroccan rap in that they bestow

⁵⁷ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=m4l3gy5HBxQ> [Accessed April 29, 2014].

⁵⁸ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=m4l3gy5HBxQ&list=PLEB1A14210D854767&index=4&feature=plcp> [Accessed April 21, 2014].

⁵⁹ As discussed in Chapter Two, in Morocco there are laws that regulate swearwords and obscene gestures in the media. Sections 5, 6 and 7 of the Press Code of 2003, deal with the prohibition of and punishment for publications that are determined to attack the public morality. Article 60 sets out a punishment for whoever publicly performs songs or speeches that are contrary to morality and public morals. (<http://adala.justice.gov.ma/production/html/Fr/41861.htm>; <http://www.wipo.int/edocs/lexdoc/s/laws/fr/ma/ma052fr.pdf> [Accessed April 22, 2014]). However, it is unclear if these laws affect video clips posted on YouTube.

⁶⁰ Other rappers have included similar warnings of explicit lyrics. For example, the cover of Don Bigg’s album *Byad ou K7al* (2009) shows a parental advisory note, which also appears at the beginning of the 8th freestyle “B.M.W” (2013) of the Casablanca crew Bizzmakers (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JhpdCGrfAuw> [Accessed April 21, 2014]). All these warnings are written in English.

⁶¹ The middle finger in Morocco, equivalent to the finger in other cultures, it usually pointed to the eyes. However Chaht Man, as other Moroccan rappers like Don Bigg or Mobydick [see Figure 4], also employ the middle finger as used in Europe and the US.

⁶² <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UMrMKEmhoos> [Accessed April 28, 2014].

symbolic capital, the use of sexualized woman fails to support Chaht Man's claims to be a rebellious rapper.

The use of anger, class inequities and other issues that have come to be associated with revolution and rebellion are also noted by Rey Chow when she discusses Chinese popular music:

While the perception of class is undoubtedly present in the subversive emotions of contemporary Chinese popular music it is present less as an agency for struggle than as the disciplinary cliché of the dominant culture *to be struggled against*. This is precisely because "class struggle" has been lived through not merely in the form of critical talk but also in everyday experience, as official ideology and national culture. (1993, p.148)

Chow's (1993, p.149) argument suggests that class struggle has been used as the foundation for the official culture of the nation and, therefore, became normalized. For this reason, in discussing US hip hop's claimed marginality, Paul Gilroy argues that hip hop has become "as official, as routinised, as its overblown defiance" (1994, p.51). In Morocco and in the MENA region, this sense of class struggle is best articulated through the term *hogra* meaning contempt as a source of anger. As Charles Tripp suggests, *hogra* "is the powerful word used by many in the country [referring to Algeria however it is also commonly used in Morocco] to sum up the nature of the relationship between 'Le Pouvoir' [the power – referring to the ruling elite] and the people".

Despite the idea of *hogra* is alive in contemporary Morocco, Moroccan youth –and as the previous section argues in the MENA region and Africa– are simplistically depicted in a constant state of anger. As some media and some researchers tend to look at youth cultural production in these terms, and the global

market selects those singers who comply with a particular depiction of the Moroccan artist, criticisms to elites embodied in the Fessi family become part of cultural narratives without meaning an act of resistance as such. However, limiting criticisms to the Moroccan elites bolsters the strategy of diverting opposition away from the king. This manoeuvre of allowing a controlled opposition as a way of channeling dissent (Boukhars 2011, p.3) questions the very concept of ‘radical’ political lyrics as it is witness to the fact that social and political engaged songs may be just part of the monarchy’s strategy to remain in power. Therefore, certain ‘radical’ political lyrics that claim to be narratives of ‘resistance’ do not constitute dissent as such. ‘Revolution’ as a sign of resistance, opposition and anger has become part of what rappers are not only expected to do (by the media as in the case of the MENA uprisings or by the state), but also what they are officially authorized to show. Moreover, although criticisms to the elites may bestow rappers in Morocco with symbolic capital, these need to be developed in terms of narrating how social inequities affect the urban youth everyday lives and not as a simple repetition of names that denote resistance (Al Khattabi) or co-option (El Fessi).

Chaht Man’s rebellious persona is seen as superficial because its performance is limited to mentioning names that represent rebellious Moroccan historical figures in the case of Khattabi, and nepotistic in the case of al Fassi family. Therefore, when a rapper brands him or herself as rebellious, the lyrics and performance of this artistic persona require to go beyond the use of certain names and engage other social issues such as gender equality. As Russell A. Potter states, if rap wants to become a “serious challenge to the forces of commodification, it needs to do more than simply make lyrical resistance” (1995, p.113). In other words, a profound engagement with

the local context cannot be limited to ‘Political’ lyrics but must entail other forms of links with local issues beyond the local clichés, in this case, relate to urban unprivileged youth lives. Being an engaged rapper in Moroccan rap scene also involves the ability of the artist to share ideas and feelings through their music. The meaning of ‘resistance’ therefore is created through Political and political lyrics, that is, the artists’ ability to relate to its context:

Texts are made meaningful according to each individual’s cultural frames of reference and cultural capital, since the textual content is reintroduced to the social realm through interpretative practices (the act of making meaning) and social actions based upon interpretations. Texts can be studied as representations of reality, but the textual rendering can never guarantee the produced outcome or the “reality effects” that result when they are swept up and into people’s lives. (Forman 2002, p.15)

In this sense, as lyrics are decoded within social, cultural, political, and economic contexts, Chaht Man’s inability to go beyond certain political narratives that are not new as they form also part of other rappers’ work, as well as a lack of an in-depth relation to his context in his music production portray him as ‘inauthentic.’ So when Chaht Man adopts the pseudonym *attawri*, he is expected to be fully revolutionary, and simply branding himself as such is not sufficient to gain street credibility.

This section demonstrates how Chaht Man has capitalized on the narratives of revolution, marginality and oppression, and went on to show that his social and political engagement has not, however, convinced the audience. An open letter published in *La Vie Éco* (July 17, 2012) accused Chaht Man of abusing the revolutionary motif. Written by music journalist Imane Lahlou, the letter accuses the rapper of not being able to follow rap’s demands: “Dear Chaht Man, you have killed

rap and everything it represents” (*La Vie Éco* July 17, 2012).⁶³ Behind Lahlou’s statement is her consideration that rappers in Morocco must be politically and socially engaged but also to evidence they have artistic skills as rappers. Lahlou’s disbelief of Chaht Man’s narrative is related to the fact that the rapper does not emerge as authentically engaged. Although Chaht Man acknowledges the politics of the ‘world music’ category and international media when dealing with youth in the region, he fails to engage locally with his audience.⁶⁴ As argued at the beginning of this section, the failure of Chaht Man’s revolutionary performance led the rapper to change his pseudonym to *L’9bi7* (the ugly), cutting ties with the revolution and the political claim to condemn oppression, and therefore avoid criticisms.

Despite Chaht Man’s failure to relate with local feelings of oppression and marginality, other rappers have proved their artistic creativity and skills to successfully connect with urban youth. As Chapter Four section four demonstrates, Muslim’s narrations of the everyday lives of the unprivileged Moroccan youth have bestowed him with street credibility. Other rappers in Morocco have gained this credibility by connecting creatively with local youth through the experience of US urban unprivileged youth and racism embedded in rap music. The next section explores the case of rapper Dizzy DROS and his use of ‘blackness’ as a signifier of marginality to relate to the local urban unprivileged youth. This case provides evidence that constructing an ‘authentic’ Moroccan rapper, local artists may relate to

⁶³ <http://www.lavieeco.com/news/culture/-cher-chaht-man-tu-as-tue-le-rap-et-tout-ce-qu-il-represente-22788.html> [Accessed April 29, 2014].

⁶⁴ Although Chaht Man belongs to Casa Crew, a group pioneer with Don Bigg, H-Kayne, or Muslim in the Moroccan scene, in his solo career his fan base is limited to some 11,000 likes on his Facebook official page (<https://www.facebook.com/chaht.man.officiell> [accessed October 10, 2013]). This is compared to Don Bigg, who has nearly 200,000 fans (<https://www.facebook.com/DonBiggOfficialFanPage> [accessed October 10, 2013]), and H-Kayne with over 420,000 (<https://www.facebook.com/pages/H-KAYNE/144387547720> [accessed October 10, 2013]) and Muslim over half a million fans (<https://www.facebook.com/MuslimProd> [accessed October 10, 2013]).

global youth feelings of exclusion, however, they need to creatively address their local context in order to engage with their audience.

3. 'Blackness' and Urban Youth

In her "Postmodern Blackness" (1990), bell hooks establishes a link between the experience of marginality between Black people in the US and other experiences of exclusion. She argues that 'blackness' (Ibid) has become a signifier of marginality that relates with, for example, Moroccan urban unprivileged youth in their mutual feeling of disconnection with their local context. This consideration of 'blackness' allows us to argue that there is a common experience between groups such as the young underprivileged in Morocco and the inner city Black youth of the US. Thus, as hooks suggestion reveals, the feelings of alienation and despair shared by people across boundaries of class, gender and 'race' can be a base to construct solidarities. These solidarities are transmitted by rap music from performers to listeners around the globe and embodied in the relationship between different hip hop scenes around the world, as Halifu Osumare (2007, p.15) points out with the notion of 'connective marginalities.' In her book, Osumare suggests the notion of 'connective marginalities' as a theoretical frame to understand youth's associations when it comes to global hip hop. These connective marginalities are inspired by the urban Black and Latino youth experience of marginality, which formed the origin of hip hop culture. Osumare advocates for any investigation of hip hop the consideration of the issue of 'race,' its place in the US, and the different ways 'blackness' has been appropriated and exported (Ibid, p.8). Therefore, Osumare argues, alongside hooks, that the concept of 'blackness' embodied in hip hop culture and rap music is "a

methodology for voicing marginality by other historical oppressed peoples” (Ibid, p.71).

The connection of global marginalities to the US experience of ‘blackness’ can be seen in figures like Malcolm X who has become symbols of resistance and fight against oppression for Moroccan rappers. In *Rebel Music* (2014, p.xxx), Hicham Aidi claims that the figures of Malcolm X and the Black Panthers contemporarily feature abundantly in Europe’s Muslim youth discourse, even more than they do in America. Aidi argues for the existence of a connection between global youth and the racial struggle of the US in the same terms as hooks (1994) and Osumare (2007). Some Although issues of ‘race’ or racism have not been focal points of Moroccan rap, many rappers draw on prominent African American activists such as Martin Luther King or Malcolm X in relation to their own local context of oppression and despair. For example, in my interview with Philo (2013, interview, May 8) from Thug Gang, the rapper claimed that one of his main inspirations was Malcolm X because of the latter’s fight for the rights of the marginalized Black community in the US. Rapper Mobydick – as referred to in the following section – embodies in his artistic persona by associating it also with Malcolm X. Another example of the dialogue between Moroccan rap and African American activism may be found in Don Bigg’s song “Casanegra”⁶⁵ (2009). Don Bigg was inspired by the well-known speech “I have a dream” delivered by Martin Luther King on August 28, 1963 where Dr. King called for racial equality and for an end to discrimination. The song “Casanegra” – just as many others in Moroccan rap – deals mainly with the local situation of social inequalities between the rich and poor. The rapper criticizes

⁶⁵ <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=67-EvFBDYOo> [Accessed April 15, 2014].

the decay of society denouncing corruption, poverty, terrorism and migration among other topics. Towards the end of the song, Don Bigg performs a speech in Darija that recreates the popular speech saying, “Yesterday I had a dream.”⁶⁶ Although this dream does not focus on racial issues, it discusses social and economic problems in Morocco. As Don Bigg says, he dreams of:

A Morocco with human rights for you and me... A Morocco with an infrastructure and not many complaints/A Morocco with roads without holes/A Morocco with lot of generosity... A Morocco with government full of good ministers and without thieves/A literate Morocco not an angry Morocco⁶⁷

Don Bigg’s enumeration of the country’s problems is followed in this song by a line where the rapper draws on a key slogan in President’s Barack Obama first presidential campaign. The line states that he dreams of: “A Morocco of ‘Yes we can’ not a Morocco of: yes if only.”⁶⁸ The resonance to the racial struggle allows the Moroccan rapper to connect with marginality here represented by ‘blackness’ and the struggle against racism. Although Don Bigg’s use of Dr. King’s speech or Obama’s campaign to relate social and economic problems in Morocco, ‘race’ and racism are absent in the rapper’s narrative as these are not significantly perceived as a problem in Morocco.

Until recently in Morocco, issues of ‘race,’ racism, or slavery have been absent from the public sphere. The official discourse is denial, and silence on racial attitudes and racism on the basis of skin color (El Hamel 2012, p.2). The depiction of

⁶⁶ “*lbareh hlamt helma.*”

⁶⁷ “*Mghrib fih 7o9o9 l insan lik o lia... Mghrib fih l’infrastructure o 9allat chkwa/Mghrib fih tor9an o 7fari msdouda/Mghrib l karam oljoud walaboudd... Mghrib fih wizara mhayba bl wozara o 9éllat chffara/Mghrib 9ari mghrib wa3i machi Mghrib ka3i.*”

⁶⁸ “*Mghrib dyal ‘Yes We Can’ machi Mghrib dyal ‘Yes law kan.’*”

Moroccan national identity as an Arab-Muslim nation as Chapter One argues emphasizes a country racially and ethnically homogenous blind to the existing racial and ethnic differences. At the turn of century, the establishment of the Royal Institute of Amazigh Cultures (IRCAM)⁶⁹ in 2002 and the incorporation of Amazigh as an official language together with Arabic in the 2011 Constitution⁷⁰ both contributed officially to the recognition of the country as ethnically heterogeneous. However, between 2012-2014, the media, King Mohammed VI and the government have paid increasing attention to racial issues in the country. Several articles appeared in *Slate Afrique*⁷¹ (November 28, 2012), *Jadaliyya*⁷² (August 1, 2013) and *Jeune Afrique*⁷³ (April 29, 2014) – among others – voicing the racism that Black foreign migrants waiting to cross to Europe, as well as students, suffer in Morocco. In September 2013, King Mohammed VI presided over a working session in Casablanca to review various aspects related to the issue of African immigration in Morocco.⁷⁴ Then, in the monthly magazine *Zamane* (‘time’ in Arabic) included in the November 2013 issue a dossier of various articles discussing the origins of racism in Morocco. This dossier was the basis for Chouki El Hamel’s argument that in the late seventeenth century Moroccan society was divided by skin color and that “racist ideologies sprung in order to establish and preserve the social boundaries that demarcate the identities and privileges of the Arabs and the Berbers” (El Hamel 2012, p.2). Yet,

⁶⁹ http://www.ircam.ma/doc/divers/presentation_of_ircam.pdf [Accessed May 2, 2014].

⁷⁰ <http://www.maroc.ma/NR/rdonlyres/2298ADD6-703C-471E-B924-A5E4F396FEA2/0/Texteint%C3%A9gralduprojetdenouvelleConstitution.pdf> [Accessed May 2, 2014].

⁷¹ <http://www.slateafrique.com/99053/etudiants-afrique-maroc-rabat-racisme-violences-casa> [Accessed May 2, 2014].

⁷² http://www.jadaliyya.com/pages/index/13324/complicity-and-indifference_racism-in-morocco [Accessed May 2, 2014].

⁷³ <http://www.jeuneafrique.com/Article/JA2779p020.xml0/racisme-maghreb-noirs-negre-maghreb-racisme-au-maghreb-les-noirs-sont-ils-des-citoyens-comme-les-autres.html> [Accessed May 2, 2014].

⁷⁴ <http://www.diplomatie.ma/Portals/0/Communiqu%C3%A9%202013/Communiqu%C3%A9snew.pdf> [Accessed May 2, 2014].

behind this current recast in the official discourse stands the increase in sub-Saharan migrants to Morocco, migrants that no longer use Morocco as mere door to Europe (Bilgili & Weyel 2009, p.18; Hass 2009, p.1). This new social context has awakened society's concern with racism that is targeted against the sub-Saharan migrants.

Despite the lack of attention to racial issues in Morocco, music and the music cultural scene – music festivals, and associations – have acted as catalyst to insert narratives on 'race' and an African consciousness within the discourse of the predominantly Arab-Muslim Moroccan identity. The Gnawa tradition and music with origins in West Africa have preserved the few narratives on slavery and 'race' that exist in Moroccan culture (El Hamel 2012, p.2). Chouki El Hamel's (2008, p.247) research provides evidence that 'Gnawa' as a term was used to designate 'Blacks' from that African region. In contemporary Morocco, Gnawa are considered as a distinct ethnic group with a marginal collective status (Ibid). In the 1970s, the mythical group Nass El Ghiwane highlighted Gnawa's position within Moroccan musical tradition by employing instruments like the *gembri*⁷⁵ in their songs (Callen 2006, p.5). Even if 'blackness' in Morocco is not uniquely related to Gnawa traditions and music, the construction of Gnawa as Black African turns 'blackness' into a form of otherness and displays it as an exclusive characteristic of Gnawa (El Maarouf 2013, p.6). While Gnawa is considered a Moroccan genre, it is constructed in contemporary terms as the music of the racial 'other' and its foreign origin is often highlighted as an important component of this music (See for example Langlois 2009, p.218; Bentahar 2010, p.41). Gnawa's connection to Moroccan identity inspired Fnaïre, and the group capitalized on Gnawa sounds to construct their taqlidi

⁷⁵ See note 80 on page 91.

rap narrative. However, in their discourse, Fnaïre declares that Morocco is a country free of racism as they claim in the documentary *I Love Hip Hop in Morocco* (2007). In this documentary, the rap crew alleges that while racism is a problem for the US, it is absent in Morocco where the real problem is poverty. In this sense, as Chouki El Hamel's *Black Morocco* (2012) argues, in Morocco there is a reluctance to discuss slavery and 'race' as a result of Islamic pride about the absence of prejudice and oppression in Islam (El Hamel 2008, p.242). In believing that the country is free from racism and slavery, El Hamel affirms that these problems are often connected with the United States (El Hamel 2012, p.2). Therefore, 'blackness' in the Moroccan rap context, as well as Gnawa music, is not a political move against acts of racism, but the establishment of a cultural link to marginality. Reenacting speeches and slogans emanating from the US context helps to transform 'blackness' as a global signifier of marginality and difference "marked already in other countries" (Osumare 2007, p.62).

'Race' persists as an identity signifier of the non-Moroccan – even if there are many Black Moroccans – and associated with migrants from sub-Saharan Africa, so that 'blackness' in Morocco is associated with slavery and inferiority (Schaefer 2009, pp.56–57). The dominant culture has marginalized Blacks in Morocco, referring to them as 'Abid (slaves in Arabic), Haratin (free Black people), Sudan (Black Africans), Gnawa (Black West Africans), and Sahrawa (Blacks from the Sahara region) (El Hamel 2012, p.2). This association between Black and foreigner appears

in media coverage such as the magazine *MarocHebdo* (November 2, 2012) in an article titled “Le Péril Noir”⁷⁶ (The Black Peril) [Figure 24].



Figure 24. Cover of the magazine *MarocHebdo*

⁷⁶ <http://www.maroc-hebdo.press.ma/index.php/component/content/article/37-recherche-archive/5231-le-peril-noir> [Accessed May 23, 2014].

The controversial cover story shows the face of a Black sub-Saharan man and suggests in one of its bullet points that migrants from the region are a security problem for the country. The article reports on the racism and the xenophobia that sub-Saharan migrants suffer in Morocco. It also comments on the hypocrisy of European countries that on the one hand pay Morocco to act as barrier to keep the African migrants out, while on the other hand denounce the brutality of the Moroccan authority towards these migrants. The magazine cover and title created a great controversy in the country – as for example stated by Karim Boukhari former editor of the magazine *TelQuel* (November 9, 2012)⁷⁷ – as they were perceived as racist.

In a recent anti-racist campaign, the controversy was directed towards the word *ʿAzzy* (Standard Arabic transliteration) *or* *ʿazzy* (Darija), which translates in Darija to a derogative word meaning “Black person.” In Standard Arabic the term is one of respect meaning “my protector that who is the source of my prestige and my glory,” however, it is used in Morocco to refer to “Black man” in a derogative manner (Prémare 1996, p.98) and is commonly perceived as racist.⁷⁸ The term was recently used in a campaign launched by associations in defense of the sub-Saharan migrants called “*Masmiytich Azzi*” (I’m not called Black). This campaign organized a press conference on March 21, 2014 to demand the regularization of non-documented migrants in Morocco. While the media gave a great deal of space to coverage of the initiative,⁷⁹ its linking of racism with migration and sub-Saharan

⁷⁷ http://telquel.ma/2012/11/09/double-peine_544_4996 [Accessed July 23, 2014].

⁷⁸ Moreover, the collective demonym is used popularly to refer to the inhabitants of Marrakech – *ʿazzaoui* plural *azzawa*– and is rooted in the word *ʿazzy* but is not considered a derogative word.

⁷⁹ See for example, <http://www.afrik.com/maroc-masmiytich-azzi-une-campagne-inedite-contre-le-racisme-anti-noirs> [Accessed May 23, 2013]; <http://www.lemag.ma/Masmiytich-Azzi--cette->

foreigners encouraged rather than challenged the mainstream construction of Moroccan identity as not Black. In other words, the campaign overlooks the fact that Morocco is, as El Hamel's book *Black Morocco* (2012) evidences, a multiracial country. Yassine Jarram, a commentator of Hit Radio, criticized this campaign releasing a video after the beginning of the campaign in March 25, 2014 where he denounced its superficiality. In the video clip,⁸⁰ Jarram elaborates a list of misused words in Darija and other derogatory terms to point out that while there is no doubt that there is racism in Morocco, putting a stop to name-calling is not going to solve the problem. Although ending insults may be a first step to end racism, Jarram's criticism is directed towards the campaign itself as an oversimplified portrayal of racism in Morocco. Ironically, the video shows a series of objects that are incorrectly referred to in Morocco as for example, the habit of referring to all different types of yogurt as "Danone," which rather than a yoghurt is a common trademark for one brand. The video ends with a song by Ahmed Soultan "Tous Les Mêmes"⁸¹ (We Are All the Same) (2008) emphasizing the idea that Morocco's national identity is complex and multilayered.

The term 3azzy, however, take a new meaning in Dizzy DROS' music production. In his work, the word embodies the idea of US inner city unprivileged Black and Latino youth, however, the use of the word in Darija addresses his local audience. In Dizzy DROS' (2012b) narrative, the word 3azzy is framed in a similar manner to the word *nigga* largely used in Black American English, as the rapper has

[campagne-sans-precedent-sur-la-racisme-anti-noir-au-Maroc_a81893.html](http://www.libe.ma/campagne-sans-precedent-sur-la-racisme-anti-noir-au-Maroc_a81893.html) [Accessed May 23, 2013]; http://www.libe.ma/Je-ne-m-appelle-pas-Azzi_a48122.html [Accessed May 23, 2013]; <http://www.telquel-online.com/content/campagne-de-lutte-contre-le-racisme-une-premi%C3%A8re-au-maroc> [Accessed May 23, 2013].

⁸⁰ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=H0a1Io5j2Nw> [Accessed May 23, 2013].

⁸¹ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HEcRSHW057Q> [Accessed May 23, 2014].

pointed out. The word nigga in the US context became a dominant term with the emergence of hard-core gangster rap by the end of the 1980s. Although it is increasingly accepted in hip hop culture, the word remains controversial (Alim 2006, p.77). In hip hop, the word refers to a Black man, however, as Imani Perry (2004, p.142) points out, this does not mean it is a simple synonym for Black. The use of the word in the US has gone beyond denoting 'race' including a reference to conditions of marginality as opposed to the Black middle class (Basu 1998, p.374; Judy 2004, p.106). As Judy states: "Nigga is that which emerges from the demise of human capital, what gets articulated when the field nigger loses value as labour. The nigga is unemployed, null and void" (Judy 2004, p.106). In this sense, nigga is connected to the idea of 'blackness' suggested by bell hooks (1990), which involves a sense of marginality and disempowerment within society. Nevertheless, the word also constructs the idea of friendship and intimacy (Perry 2004, p.142). The focus of the polemic is not the word per se, but its use in the public sphere (Ibid, p.143). As Alim (2006, p.77) states, the word has positive in-group meanings and pejorative out-group meanings. Yet, this division is complicated when it comes to biracial interaction (Cecilia 2009, p.89). As Alim (2006, p.78) suggests, the transformation in spelling –from "nigger" to "nigga"– emphasizes such a distinction. Although the word refers to a Black male, recently the term can be used to refer to any male –"the white nigga"– or to a female. Moreover, other groups in the US like the Latino rap group Cypress Hill use the word in construction of a multiracial identity (McFarland 2008, p.41). The word "nigga" or "negro" is also used in other hip hop scenes like Brazil (Pardue 2008, p.83). Within the MENA region, rappers from the Egyptian underground scene use the word in English to identify themselves with perceived

concepts of ‘blackness’ (Williams 2010, p.84). While there is little research on the use of the word in hip hop scenes outside the US (Ibid, p.85), it is possible to find terms in different languages that embody the use and meaning of the word nigga.⁸²

In Morocco, the use of word 3azzy in hip hop is limited to the work of Dizzy DROS, who employs the word in Darija to transmit to his audience a sense of social marginality but also a sense of empowerment. The rapper capitalizes on the word and its local and global signifiers to create a social group that embodies the connection or friendship of Moroccan urban unprivileged youth. In this endeavor, DROS employs this word as a moniker, as a common noun in his songs to refer to himself, his friends, or the rest of the Moroccan youth, in his first album title *3azzy 3ando Stylo* (Nigga got Style) (2013), and as part of his artistic motto. Dizzy DROS often shouts “*3fat a 3azzy*” (Step nigga!) a motto – or shout-out – through which the rapper encourages the 3azzy to take a step, or rather to leave their mark. The word is, moreover, from the rapper’s daily life. As DROS (2012b) states, his DJ, his hype man and himself all started to use the term in reference to each other. DROS says that the term reminds the group of their identity and the life style that is reproduced in his music.

In the song “Cazafonia,” Dizzy DROS not only employs the term in reference to his friends or himself, but to further connote loyalty to the group: “*3wazza* (niggaz) are watching my back;”⁸³ or “You never see me around Cazafonia without spotting my 3azzi by my side.”⁸⁴ In this way, 3wazza, plural for 3azzy, are not only friends but are those that protect you. Dizzy DROS also uses other words like *achiri*

⁸² See Gadet (2010) for the use of “*noir*” in French rap, or Brown (2006, p.144) for the use of “*Kanak*” in Germany.

⁸³ “*3wazza koulchi mora dahri mkali.*”

⁸⁴ “*3amrek ghatchoufni ghadi; Wast Cazafonia bla matchouf l3azzy 7daya b7alla haz m3aya hadi.*”

(homie) or *khouti* (brothers), commonly used by other rappers to create the notion of brotherhood amongst Moroccan youth. With time, in concerts the audience refers to Dizzy DROS as 3azzy, as for example in the first song performed at the release of the rapper's first album in 2013.⁸⁵ The continuous performance of the word 3azzy allows the rapper to connect with Moroccan youth, despite their social backgrounds, through the idea of marginality expressed in the word 3azzy. However, by embodying the word in his own artistic persona and claiming the 3wazza as part of his group, the rapper reshapes the feeling of despair into a powerful cry for group strength in the same manner as Mobydick does, as will be discussed in the following section.

This idea of group solidarity is also performed in the video clip of "Cazafonia" in the use of a dog that stands with Dizzy DROS and his crew. The use of the image of a dog is significant due to its negative connotations in the popular Muslim imaginary, inherited from pre-Islamic Semitic traditions (Foltz 2006, p.129). Although traditionally dogs are not popular animals in Moroccan urban centers, they have become very popular in cities like Casablanca and Rabat as pets. During my fieldwork, I encountered members of the hip hop community who owned dogs in both cities, for example, rapper Don Bigg or Khalid Douache (aka DJ Key) who directed the video clip of "Cazafonia." Moreover, I increasingly saw groups of young people walking with dogs in Casablanca often along the coast in the Ain Diab area and the beach. The idea of friendship transmitted in the term 3azzy is reenacted through the dog in what Dizzy DROS calls "the dog mentality:"

⁸⁵ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UJy0cRirU7A> [Accessed May 2, 2014].

It's a part of showing people the street... there is something that we represent too. It's like... I don't like to call it like this, but is like a dog mentality, a part of our mentalities that refers to dogs. Dogs are the most faithful in the relationship to men; a dog would never leave you alone. But if you start to disrespect a dog, he will bite you. And I think this is the mentality and this is the significance of showing a dog in the video clip. (2012a, interview, February 15)

Even if dogs are popular with some members of the Moroccan hip hop community, by showing a dog in the video clip and using *kelb* (dog) as a synonym of 3azzy, DROS on the one hand emphasizes the idea of marginality, but also to protection and solidarity.

The use of dogs, however, may also be seen as the imitation of the US system, just as with the same video's use of symbols lie the Range Rover car or bandanas. At the same time that the rapper benefits from the ways in which hip hop has channeled the struggle for social justice like Civil Rights and Black Power Movements globally (Morgan & Ennett 2011, p.189), Dizzy DROS also draws on hip hop images that emphasize a cool life style (Osumare 2007, p.150). In this sense, as Moroccan rappers capitalize on the power of rap to articulate Black marginality in contemporary American culture (Rose 1994, p.3), they are also influenced by hip hop's commodification. In the video clip of "Cazafonia" (2011) Dizzy DROS appears dressed in kaki trousers, red Converse shoes, golden chains, a baseball cap and a bandana, which he wears going around Casablanca in a Range Rover car. The image re-enacts the song with reference to hip hop garments like New Era caps and bandanas: "New Era on the head to one side and the bandana."⁸⁶ The artist also

⁸⁶ "New Era *foug rass tay7a jenb wl* bandana."

performs the signature walk of the West Coast gang the Crips, to which he also refers in the lyrics: “If we had guns the jails would be full of red and green people like the Crips and Blood.”⁸⁷ In this sense, in the song Dizzy DROS searches for links and differences between the West Coast and Casablanca, insisting on local specificities by naming West Coast gangs but also the colors red and green to identify local football teams. These colors not only reference the national flag, but the respective colors of the two most famous football teams in Casablanca: Wydad and Raja. The references to California might also be associated with the homonymous rich neighborhood of Casablanca. California or Californie, in its French denomination, is situated in the South of the city and it is mainly composed of big luxurious villas surrounded by palm trees. Through the title of the song the rapper creatively establishes a connection between the high classes of both localities in Casablanca and California (US).

The lyrics of “Cazafonia” also dwell on social inequities dealing with the different aspects of the city: “In this huge city/everyone gets his daily payment stealing or begging.”⁸⁸ The fact that Dizzy DROS reflects on social inequities while traveling in a Range Rover in the video clip of the song is problematic. He claims to belong to the popular neighborhood of Bine Lamedoun;⁸⁹ however, a Range Rover suggests an association for Dizzy DROS with the upper classes and the new rich. However, at the same time, this is part of the rapper’s strategy to show the two poles

⁸⁷ “*Koun kanou 3andna frada kourra l7abss ghada tnod Bin l7mar m3a lkhdar b7al l'Crips wl Bloods.*”

⁸⁸ “*F'had lmdina dyal sakht/Koulchi baghi yjib nharo Ya b'chafra ya b'llaht.*”

⁸⁹ Dizzy DROS includes references to this popular neighborhood of Casablanca in many of his songs such as “Cazafonia” (2011) or “Men Hna” (2012).

of Moroccan urban society while narrating the youth's ambitions to climb in the social ladder.

The song "Cazafonia" succeeds in transmitting the feeling of empowerment by claiming for the ownership of the city to a youth disowned by society. When Dizzy DROS, along with his audience sing "*Cazafonia dylna dylna*," meaning Cazafonia or Casablanca is ours; they are claiming agency and the right to own their city. This chorus prompts the youth to occupy and conquer public space, that is, youth's everyday space, despite the fact that youth in the MENA region are only allowed to use the streets passively (Bayat 2010, p.11). In this sense, DROS argues that rappers have not received help from the local media including radio or TV: "We're struggling to make everything by ourselves, no one, no one came to us and said 'look, we're gonna pass your songs on the radio, we're gonna pass you on TV.' So we did impose ourselves. And this is a particularity that I really appreciate in Moroccan rap" (2012a, interview, February 15). Claiming ownership of public spaces such as the street resembles the genesis of hip hop culture, as DROS (Ibid) noted in our interview:

When you start to search about hip hop the thing that gets stuck in your mind is that it's music created by people who had nothing. So they really struggled for it to face racism, to face the social problems that they had in the US in the middle of the 70s and beginning of the 80s.

The transmission of hip hop culture is not limited to commodification, but to historical narratives that relate hip hop culture to social struggle within the Black communities in the US. In "Cazafonia," Dizzy DROS engages locally with the alienation of Moroccan youth, emphasizing their lack of control over the cities.

DROS further emphasizes the lack of mobility of the urban unprivileged in the chorus of “Cazafonia:” “We live in Cazafonia/we die in Cazafonia/we go around and we don’t get far from Cazafonia.”⁹⁰ In these lines, the city becomes a claustrophobic space without hope for change. DROS attempts to own the city because it is the only chance for change. In other words, as the city of Casablanca becomes the only space for the unprivileged youth to live, DROS claims that this youth must gain control over it and reshape it. In the song, ownership is enacted by writing the city’s name with a “z” instead of an “s;” this is a normal practice in the writing of the plural niggaz (or in other words such as the US rapper Eazy E’s own name and his solo *Eazy Duz It* (1988)) and can be interpreted in a similar way here. This is how DROS makes use of his aesthetics skills –flow, voice, rhymes, and creative language–to establish a link with urban youth. This minor change in Casablanca’s name, as well as the use of other languages (3azzy and kelb) gives Dizzy DROS a distinctive creative identity.

As other Moroccan rappers, Dizzy DROS’ cultural production includes references to Malcolm X, however, these are particularly interesting because of their direct focus on ‘race’ and racial issues. The rapper includes in the introduction to the song “3alam”⁹¹ (Crazy/World) (2013) a fragment of a speech delivered by Malcolm X where asks his African American audience about their self-hatred.⁹² Part of the speech is quoted in the song:

⁹⁰ “*Kan3icho Cazafonia/Kanmoutou Cazafonia/Kandoro ga3 l9nat w ga3ma nfoutou Cazafonia.*”

⁹¹ The title of the song plays with the expression “3alam,” which Moroccans employ to react to something that is unbelievable or astonishing. In this case, the expression translates as “it’s crazy.” Dizzy DROS employs the word that also means “world” in Arabic to discuss worldwide illnesses. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Y-rdesHDCsE> [Accessed May 23, 2014].

⁹² <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gRSgUTWffMQ> [Accessed May 23, 2014].

Who taught you to hate the color of your skin? Who taught you to hate the texture of your hair? Who taught you to hate the shape of your nose and the shape of your lips? Who taught you to hate yourself from the top of your head to the soles of your feet? Who taught you to hate your own kind? Who taught you to hate the race that you belong to so much so that you don't want to be around each other?

Using a speech that deals with issues that affect both Moroccan society and global problems allows Dizzy DROS to use 'blackness' as a symbol of otherness and marginality. In combining the song with the Malcolm X speech, the rapper initiates a dialogue between the Moroccan context and the US Civil Rights Movement. Dizzy DROS, as well as Don Bigg before, does not require a deep knowledge of Civil Rights Movements to make the connection, as the mere hint towards such figures provides the rappers with a link to what they represent: agency, resistance, the fight for Civil Rights, and marginality. Moreover, the use of this speech is an act of empowerment where DROS demands his audience to reflect on self-hatred. This speech allows DROS not only to create awareness of racism in Morocco, but also to reflect on the country's elites role in creating this continuous aversion against the lower class.

While Chaht Man's musical production has been criticized, Dizzy DROS' artistic strategy has succeeded in connecting with the street and parts of the cultural field. *TelQuel* (December 8, 2013)⁹³ praised the album *3azzy 3ando Stylo* (2013) as one of the best hip hop works of the past decade in Morocco, and his skills as a rapper were acknowledged in an earlier article by the same magazine (October 3, 2013),⁹⁴ in which the journalist wrote highly of DROS' style, his voice, his

⁹³ http://telquel.ma/2013/12/08/dizzy-dros-le-rappeur-qui-monte_9949 [Accessed April 29, 2014].

⁹⁴ <http://telquel-online.com/content/festival-tremplin-le-bain-urbain> [Accessed April 29, 2014].

punchlines and his slang. *TelQuel*'s assessments are backed up by DROS' gain in audience. While Dizzy DROS' YouTube channel had over 2 million views and 9,000 subscribers in August 2013, by May of the following year the rapper had reached 9 million views and 44,500 subscribers.⁹⁵ The rise in fans is constant in Dizzy DROS' Facebook page, which went from 16,394 to 69,400 likes, or twitter account, which went from 1,875 followers to 4,691 subscribers.⁹⁶ This data evidences the popularity gained by the rapper connected to his artistic skills, including good rhymes, lyrics, flow, punchlines, creative language, and the creativity of cultural production can thus be seen as attracting rap listeners and establishing a relationship between the rapper and the marginalized urban youth.

Dizzy DROS' use of 'blackness' and 'race' as well as his acknowledgment of Malcolm X may be directly linked to the hip hop community as rap conveys a sense of group in which youth can share experiences and enter into a trans-local dialogue. 'Blackness,' I argue, positions Dizzy DROS and the audience within a wider geographical setting including Moroccan youth as a part of the global youth and hence prompting a shared sense of social struggle and marginality. The fact that Dizzy DROS' narrative employs 'race,' as a conveyor of marginality in order to connect with urban youth is not random. The idea of 'race' and racism is a public issue in contemporary Morocco. Despite the fact that the media and anti-racist campaigns relate racism to sub-Saharan migrants, a rapper like DROS incorporates 'race' in the everyday life of hip hop audience. The rapper refers to class inequities and social exclusion through language that relates the ideas to the suffering of Black

⁹⁵ Data collected on August 16, 2013 and May 23, 2014 from <https://www.youtube.com/user/DizzyDROS/about> [Accessed May 23, 2014].

⁹⁶ Data collected on August 16, 2013 and May 23, 2014 from <https://www.facebook.com/dizzydros> and <https://twitter.com/dizzydros> [Accessed May 23, 2014].

Moroccans. The case of DROS shows that Moroccan rappers must employ creative strategies, as is the case of use of 'blackness' in the Moroccan context, to stand out in the cultural scene and produce imaginative work that connections with marginal youth. The next section presents the case of Mobydick to further argue for the role of creativity and popular culture in connecting with marginal youth. As in the case of Dizzy DROS, Mobydick displays an ability to connect with local youth by creating a dialogue between global popular culture and local slang. However, Mobydick's artistic creativity stages a wide variety of characters from US popular culture, Japanese manga comics, or popular singers, as well as a unique style where that highlights humor as a tool for social critique.

4. Global Culture and The Empowerment of Local Marginalities

The case of Mobydick provides evidence of the important role of creatively using popular culture, local and global, to build a space of share ideas and feelings where even if the national borders are blurred, local specificities remain in the spotlight. Although Mobydick's work also connects rap with 'blackness,' this has been one way to embody youth's global marginality. This section provides evidence of other creative ways in which to socially and politically engage including humor as the case of Mobydick suggests. This section looks at how Mobydick capitalizes on popular culture and humor to transmit the marginal position of unprivileged Moroccan urban youth. Popular culture –local, national or global– serves as a source of creativity and as a strategy that goes beyond mere radical lyrical engagement and however maintains street credibility among the local youth. The use of fictional characters or Moroccan TV shows in lyrics become powerful referents for Moroccan youth, since

they can relate to them as part of their everyday lives. The work of Mobydick evidences the wide range of creativity in the Moroccan rap scene.

In his music production, Mobydick embodies the marginal local figure of *Lmoutchou*; a name that, as Mobydick (2013, interview, July 5) explained in our interview, comes from Darija and Spanish:

Lmoutchou, comes from the real Moroccan dialect, from Darija... it is a name given to young people brought from the countryside to do household chores, Lmoutchou. Yeah! It's the young people that push the gas bottles and stuff, the young people that have the dirty jobs, Lmoutchou.⁹⁷

In Spanish this word is “*muchacho*,” defined by the Royal Spanish Academy (RAE) as a young person who works as a servant.⁹⁸ Mobydick explained that the reason for the name was to give value to people who are often teased and marginalized:

I told myself that I need to give value to this word because there are many that are called in this way, you see, we call them like this, I told myself why not to get in the shoes of this young people that are stuck with the hard jobs with no value. At least if as a consequence of giving this name it becomes a bit famous, then these young people, when they are called as Lmoutchou they won't feel humiliated⁹⁹

The connection with marginalization of Black urban youth is what Mobydick transmits through his use of the word Lmoutchou, just like what Dizzy DROS signified through the use of 3azzy. As Mobydick noted:

⁹⁷ “*Lmoutchou, ça sort de la vrai dialecte Marocaine, ça sort de la Darija... C'est un pseudonyme qu'on donne aux jeunes qu'on ramène du bled pour qu'ils fassent les tasses ménagères, lmoutchou. Wé! C'est les petits qui poussent les bonbonnes du gaz et ça, c'est les petit qui font le sale boulot, lmoutchou*”

⁹⁸ <http://lema.rae.es/drae/?val=muchacho> [Accessed October 10, 2013].

⁹⁹ “*Je me suis dit qu'il faut que je valorise ce mot parce qu'ils sont pleins qui portent ce pseudonyme, tu vois, on les appelle comme ça, je me suis dit pourquoi ne se mettre dans la peaux de ce petit gars là qui se tape les taches dures pour valoriser au moins si par la suivre je rendre ce nom et il devient un peu famous, les jeunes quand ils se vont rappeler par lmoutchou ils vont pas se sentir humilié.*”

Mobydick: 3azzy is the same thing! He has changed the humiliating aspect, you see? It's no longer humiliating like before.

Moreno: Now it's cool...

Mobydick: Now it's cool! (Mobydick 2013, interview, July 5)¹⁰⁰

Lmoutchou and 3azzy are words employed within the Moroccan hip hop community mainly to identify Mobydick and Dizzy DROS respectively.

In a song called "Checkmate"¹⁰¹ included in the mixtape *Dars Khass Ba3da L'Album* (Particular Lesson After the Album) (2011), Mobydick also capitalizes on figures like Malcolm X or Dr. Martin Luther King, associating them to his own circumstances and to the situation of the Lmoutchou. This is carried out as a strategy that seeks to empower local marginal youth. Mobydick, from the city of Rabat, makes use of the term as a signifier for marginality. In this song, Mobydick dwells on the idea of marginality through popular culture using representative figures of African American culture, including singers like Marvin Gaye or Michael Jackson, sportsmen like Cassius Clay (Muhammad Ali) or Penny Hardaway, as well as popular rappers like Notorious Big or Ice T. Through this list of names, Mobydick establishes a link with a wider range of Black US culture to claim the popularity of these figures have within their own domains in spite of the US history of racial segregation.

Since Mobydick uses Lmoutchou to refer to himself, making use of US and Moroccan culture respectively, he is able to capitalize on certain characters associated with social struggle to relate marginalities in the US and in Morocco.

¹⁰⁰ "Mobydick : 3azzy c'est la même chose! Il a changé le côté humiliant, tu vois ? C'est ne plus humiliant comme avant... ; Moreno : c'est cool maintenant... ; Mobydick : maintenant c'est cool !"

¹⁰¹ <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VxagfDYjHS4> [Accessed April 15, 2014].

Thus, when he states “Lmoutchou X like Malcolm,”¹⁰² Mobydick embodies the notion of Black Power by establishing a link between Malcolm X as and himself as Lmoutchou, and thus connects two local experiences of marginality. In our interview, Mobydick highlighted the relationship between the Black urban marginalized youth in the US with rappers in Morocco:

Here in Morocco it is not the young people from ghettos that make rap. Here in Morocco it's young people that go to school that make rap. The poor people from ghettos here are not even able to write their name, we have to leave them aside, it's another level, you know what I mean, let's say we [Moroccan rappers] are the equivalent to [those in] US ghettos. (2013, interview, July 5)

Mobydick reflects on the fact that even if most of Moroccan rappers come from poor or modest backgrounds, they are educated. This relationship is developed and explained in a line of the song “Checkmate,” where Mobydick dedicates the song to “all those who struggled and sacrificed.”¹⁰³ The group is further associated in this song to famous US rappers such as Notorious B.I.G, to whom he also refers to by his pseudonym “Big Poppa.” “A lot of MC's have empty words, they see life only in pink, playing on the beat of Notorious B.I.G... Homie, I don't want to make money by flattering someone, even though I have the opportunity, Lmoutchou is authentic like Big Poppa.”¹⁰⁴ The rapper makes the local idea of marginality authentic by comparing Lmoutchou to a well-known African American rapper. He goes further in the song and refers to other hard-core hip hop crews such as L'Onyx or F.U.-Schnickens. In these lyrics, Mobydick defines the authentic as a connection between

¹⁰² “*Lmoutchou X ki Malcolm.*”

¹⁰³ “*li 9assa w'de77a.*”

¹⁰⁴ “*9ouwwt les MC's fihoum lfara, chayef deniya ghi b'le7mouriya, la3eb foug l'beat d'Notorious Big... 3chiri ma bghitch ndir l'flous b'l7iss l'cappa, wakha lforsa kayna, lmoutchou authentique ki Big Poppa.*”

the Moroccan urban unprivileged youth and the local US Black and Latino urban unprivileged youth. The lack of social mobility, the despair, and the frustration are problems faced both by Moroccan and African American youth on the lower scales of society.

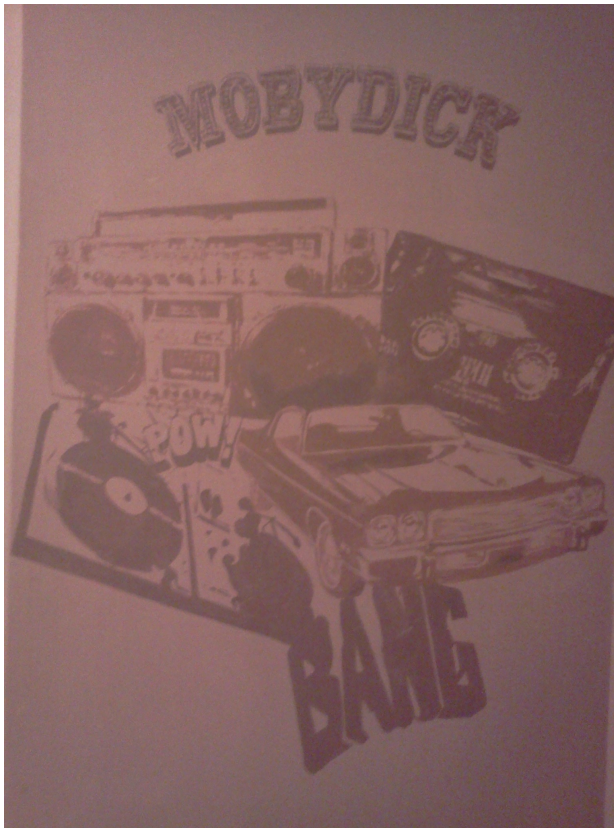


Figure 25. Wall in Mobydick's Adghal Records Studios in Salé (2013)

In aiming to accentuate the value of marginal Moroccan youth, Mobydick (2013, interview, July 5) also appropriates comic characters, in particular fictional heroes such as Batman, Superman or the Incredible Hulk, whom he used to watch on television as a child. The fact that these characters are mainly foreign suggests a lack of local heroes to which Moroccan children can relate. The influence of superheroes is present not only in the lyrics of his songs, but also on the clothes he wears, and on the walls of his studio, Adghal Records, in Salé [Figure 25]. Even Mobydick's logo

incorporates Superman symbol, substituting the “s” for an “m.” Mobydick employs his own version of the insignia in many of his cultural productions including pictures and garments, as well as for the cover of his mixtape *Dars Khass Ba3da L’Album* (Particular Lesson After the Album) (2011) and on caps and t-shirts with which he often appears wearing at concerts.¹⁰⁵ Mobydick also wears garments with other American superheroes like The Incredible Hulk¹⁰⁶ or Batman, whose symbol he wore on a cap during our interview [Figure 26].



Figure 26. Mobydick and Dizzy DROS at Adghal Records Studios in Salé (2013)

¹⁰⁵ In his Facebook profile he has posted caricatures where he is also wearing a Superman cap, holds the modified symbol of this superhero, or is dressed with Superman’s garments. (<https://www.facebook.com/media/set/?set=a.10151311520599594.492262.7234204593&type=3;https://www.facebook.com/photo.php?fbid=10151318794374594&set=a.433057804593.232721.7234204593&type=3&theater> [accessed May 2, 2013]).

¹⁰⁶ <https://www.facebook.com/media/set/?set=a.433057804593.232721.7234204593&type=3> [Accessed May 2, 2013].

These comic characters normally referred to as superheroes, carry controversial cultural baggage, partially because they were all created in the US. Superheroes became popular in the US during the economic recession of the 1930s (Růžička 2010, p.46). Superhero comic books have also been related to warfare (Costello 2009, p.5), and are part of an ideological narrative structured around fighting in the name of good and honest citizens. Moreover, superheroes are frequently victorious in the struggle against evil (Růžička 2010, p.46; Rubin 2012, p.411). This narrative is associated with a white nationalist fantasy, as the case of *Captain America* suggests (Dittmer 2005, p.627; Costello 2009, pp.5–6). Although these characters have evolved and are today more ethnically and racially diverse, gender remains problematic in the superhero narrative (Stabile 2009, p.87). Superhero narratives are also dominated by a childhood nostalgia and fail to reflect the “ethical complexities of adulthood” (Cates 2011, p.853).

Despite the numerous, diverse and complex issues around superhero comics, Mobydick employs the characters in their capacity to empower Lmoutchou. A superhero is also a person with extraordinary human powers and capabilities, or is fundamentally different (Kaveney 2008, p.4). By associating Lmoutchou with superpowers and victory, the rapper constructs an empowered character that fights in the face of the country’s evil: the Makhzen. The Lmoutchou represent the good and honest, and demonize the state headed by the Makhzen in favor of the unprivileged. This relationship between the rapper, cartoons, and superheroes can be seen in the acknowledgements from his album *Lmoutchou Family* (2011):

This album has been achieved thanks to the comics that I watched during my childhood, the movies I absorbed, to my fear of police and authorities, to Spiderman, Ironman, Hulk,

Thor, Superman, Green Lantern, Batman, Green Arrow, to the Avengers and the Justice League, Darth Vader, Steve Austin, Captain Majid,¹⁰⁷ and especially Grendizer...

Many of the characters on this list appear in “Checkmate,” as well as others like Willy Wonka, Einstein and Beethoven. Mobydick also thanks “the Moroccan justice system” in the credits, before continuing the list with his parents, family, and friends for allowing him to satirize the fear of the Makhzen and security apparatus in Morocco. In this creative way, Mobydick depicts fictional characters as the only ones capable of saving Moroccan society from injustice. These fictional heroes help the artist combat the numerous obstacles to producing an album, including the Makhzen’s persecution, but also of belonging to the margins of society. The fact that none of these fictional characters are Moroccan, however, may be problematic in that it may indicate the lack of powerful local characters capable of fighting the power. Yet, Mobydick’s character Lmoutchou comes to fill in this gap by creating a new local superhero.

Mobydick also resorts to satire in the song “Checkmate,” where he alludes to the uprisings of the MENA. In the midst of these uprisings, on February 22, 2011, Muammar Gaddafi, the former Libyan leader, delivered a televised speech denouncing the violence inflicted against his government. In this speech, Gaddafi claimed that he would hunt protestors “*chiber chiber, bit bit, dar dar, zenga zenga*,” that is “inch by inch, room by room, house by house, street by street.” Mobydick appropriates the last words of this sentence in “Checkmate” to state: “My audience wears large clothes and have earrings/everyone has Lmoutchou Family from house

¹⁰⁷ Captain Majid is the Arabic name for the Japanese manga Captain Tsubasa known as Flash Kicker in the US.

to house, street to street... towards the front.”¹⁰⁸ In this sense, Mobydick describes his audience as part of the hip hop culture through their clothes aesthetics, while creating political satire to criticize an authoritarian leader in the Arabic-speaking the region. The reference to such a political character is especially significant since the speech went viral on YouTube as a remixed song called “Zenga Zenga”¹⁰⁹ (Street, Street) that mocks Gaddafi (*The New York Times* February 27, 2011).¹¹⁰ During my fieldwork in Morocco, the song was used as a mobile phone ring, and the phrase was used frequently to make fun of Gaddafi. The effect of using sarcasm in his criticism of Moroccan institutions or authoritarian leaders results in a subtle but strong act of engagement with local and trans-local contexts.

When asked about the use of humor in his lyrics, Mobydick (2013, interview, July 5) claims that it is easier to communicate when people are having fun. Mobydick sees rappers in Morocco as often presenting themselves as extremely serious people explaining in an interview “I don’t understand why our rappers take things so seriously... In order to talk about important things, a dramatic tone is not required” (*L’Officiel Hommes Maroc* 2011, p.51). Mobydick believes a sense of humor is something that US rappers make use of. In “Checkmate,” Mobydick criticizes rappers by linking them to the Moroccan TV program “*Lalla L3arousa*” (Married Woman) saying, “Rap in this country is controlled by *Lalla Le3rosa*.”¹¹¹ The light entertainment program invites several couples to compete to win a free wedding party, a theme that reflects the hardships young couples face in getting

¹⁰⁸ “*joumhourî dareb large we dayer tangua/koulchi 3endo lmoutchou family men “dar l’dar, zanga zanga... ila amame.”*”

¹⁰⁹ <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cBY-0n4esNY> [Accessed April 15, 2014].

¹¹⁰ <http://www.nytimes.com/2011/02/28/world/middleeast/28youtube.html> [Accessed May 23, 2014].

¹¹¹ “*Rap fle’blad, chaddah lalla le3rosa.*”

married due to the high cost. By comparing some Moroccan rappers to the program, Mobydick ridicules the rap scene by reducing it to a machine in search of profit (See Chapter Three section three). This criticism of rappers who only engage superficially with hip hop culture and local issues is also expressed by Mobydick using jargon. In “Checkmate,” Mobydick refers to these sorts of rappers as *frex poperop*, that as he explained to me describes someone that dresses in a hip hop style but does not know anything about the culture behind it. As the rapper expresses in “Checkmate:” “Fuck *frex poperop* is not about large clothes and caps.”¹¹² Later in the song, Mobydick refers to these people as *bouzebbal* (from Arabic *zbala*, meaning rubbish or garbage), a word commonly used by youth in Morocco to insult another person as a fool or empty-headed: “Homie be tough, I spray *bouzebbal* with Baygon.”¹¹³ In this line he compares *bouzebbal* with Baygon, a common product that serves to kill insects. Those who are just into hip hop as a trendy and ‘cool’ style but do not engage with it fully are thus equivalent to insects. Although this association may be perceived as harsh, this line is part of Mobydick’s ego-trip¹¹⁴ where the rapper attempts to prove his creativity through humorous metaphors. In this endeavor, Mobydick defines what he perceives an ‘authentic’ rapper as those artists with creativity that do not fall for the local market’s predicaments.

“Checkmate” draws on sarcasm in different ways to engage locally, trans-locally, nationally, and globally with the world that surrounds not only Mobydick, but to a large extent Moroccan youth. However, the creation of a character like Lmoutchou suggests the rapper’s aim to specially connect with and empower

¹¹² “fuck *frex poperop ma b9atch fel large wl'casquette*.”

¹¹³ “*3chiri koun khsime, rach bouzebbal b'Baygon*.”

¹¹⁴ For more on ego-trips see p.221.

Morocco's marginalized urban youth. Mobydick's creativity enables him to capitalize on extremely varied fictional and popular characters to construct an empowered marginal artistic self. The kind of engagement that Mobydick suggests requires rappers to move out of their comfort zone and to experiment with creative artistic narratives that surpass national borders, however, mainly engaging with youth's day-to-day life within them.

Conclusion

Hip hop culture provides a complex field where artists and audience can connect different local experiences of marginality. This chapter reflects on the role of the international music market, some media and local audiences in influencing the field and rappers music production. It argues that staging marginality is of great importance to international media when dealing with MENA region's youth. This media presents the 'authentic' Moroccan rapper as a 'radical' political lyricist and constructs him/her as angry and oppressed without regarding the aesthetic value and creativity or how the artists' music is 'read' locally. However, the case of Chaht Man suggests that this is not enough to engage with the local audiences. Young audiences require a deeper and more nuanced music production that better reflects their shared feelings of exclusion including, however, an aesthetic value and creativity. As this chapter argues, aesthetics and artistic skills are a significant tool for rappers to engage with hip hop culture and its members. Mobydick creatively combines renowned political and social figures with fictional heroes such as Superman or Batman to empower the fictional character he has created. This fictional character, Lmoutchou, represents local marginal youth and bestows them with dignity in the same way that rapper Dizzy DROS draws on the term 3azzy to contribute to the

discussion on issues of 'race,' marginality, and hip hop. Mobydick and Dizzy DROS claim their agency by creatively engaging with Moroccan society and resisting preconceived ideas of youth's marginality, or capitalizing on global conversations framed in hip hop culture.

Conclusion

This thesis has strived to map the Moroccan rap scene in order to establish the significant role that contemporary urban youth culture plays within the Moroccan cultural field. This study shows that rap music has rooted as part of Morocco's youth popular music providing a space for youth to narrate, negotiate and reimagine the nation. Analysis of rap music has proved the importance of national identity for rappers whether they reproduce, reshape or broaden dominant narratives on the nation. However, it is within urban areas where everyday lives take place where rap music stages the fight between dominant and oppositional narratives of the social, economic, cultural and political situation of the country. Moroccan rappers whether they support or challenge dominant social and political discourses profit from cities as a space where to construct youth's habitus. Rappers like Fnaïre, H-Kayne and Don Bigg have capitalized on urban spaces and different uses of language to shape their work and support throughout it the Makhzen's narrative. These groups have been responsible of the birth of patriotic rap that also confirms the willingness of these rappers to profit from feelings of attachment to the nation to succeed in the music field, symbolically and economically, as many other Moroccan artists have done since independence in 1956. While rappers devoted to patriotic narratives claim to be engaged with national unity, a closer look at Moroccan rap music demystifies this claim by shedding light on profound socio-economic disparities that deeply divide the country's society. These disparities appear particularly in the work of Muslim and other rappers like Mobydick, L7a9ed and Dizzy DROS. However, groups in the opposition do not always encourage voices that dissent with the Makhzen. While L7a9ed has been praised by some media and some oppositional secular groups,

Muslim has been disregarded because they consider him an 'Islamist' rapper despite the rapper's demonstrated engagement with the urban unprivileged youth. Notwithstanding the claim to voice unprivileged malaises, it is not enough to show a connection with social youth as the case of Chaht Man, who limits his music production to the repetition of cultural clichés. Mobydick and Dizzy DROS evidence that developing creative artistic strategies successfully engages in empowering local youth. Aesthetics and creativity, therefore, in terms of language, rhetorical figures, beats and so forth, are not only key in conveying the rapper's messages, but also bestowing Morocco's cultural field with a rich imagination and innovative character.

In Morocco, cultural politics and rap music intertwine with the state's strategies of controlling the cultural field and youth urban cultures. Through rap was overlooked at a first stage, the Makhzen has intervened to shape rap's discourse to fit official narratives of the nation. The state headed by the Makhzen continues to present itself as the main patron of arts in Morocco, organizing and sponsoring an overwhelming majority of music events and festivals under the patronage of the king where rappers are usually programmed. The state's support and control of rap music has resulted in changes in the music production of some rappers. The most evident cases of this are those of the rap groups H-Kayne and Fnaïre, who have produced numerous songs about their love and pride of the nation. Their songs fit well into the Makhzen's agenda to promote patriotism and national unity depicting oppositional discourses as enemies of the nation. This thesis considers that patriotic themes and the constant use of national symbols are not uniquely related to feelings of love, pride, or defense of the nation. These themes are rather directly related to a gain in symbolic and economic capital for the rappers. H-Kayne, Fnaïre, and Don Bigg who

have publicly defended the status quo as promoted by the Makhzen were rewarded with royal medals by the king in 2013 and were formally invited to the palace that same year. Patriotic themes continue to provide economic benefits to artists who become in high demand by the state and in turn these artists reproduce in their songs the Makhzen's official and dominant narratives.

The fact that these rappers have received criticism by others such as Muslim and Mobydick corroborates the diversity of the rap scene and its struggle to stage the problematic social, political and economic situation of the country. Rappers like Muslim and Mobydick show their engagement with the nation by using language and themes that better relate to the Moroccan urban unprivileged youth. Muslim's focus is on the social inequities of the urban unprivileged, with which a great majority of urban youth feels connected. Rap music for these rappers becomes not only a vehicle for social control, but also a way of expressing, sharing, and experiencing ideas. The work of Mobydick expresses a will to clearly differentiate youth as a social group by using swear words that are not socially accepted in the context of family and the use of local terms such as *Lmoutchou* to empower unprivileged youth. Despite the Makhzen and other powerful cultural actors' agendas such as secular civil society groups, distinct voices in the rap scene have been able to emerge, gain a place in the public space, forge modes of self-expression, prove the significant role of the aesthetic value and creativity and, therefore, surpass the methodological binaries of co-opted versus 'authentic' rap. In this sense, through the rap group *Fnaïre* is widely perceived as co-opted, their music based on traditional Moroccan music shows a creative aim to broaden the boundaries of Moroccan national identity. On the contrary, though Don Bigg constructs his artistic persona as rebellious employing

vulgar language, US inspired beats and the group Nass El Ghiwane as main influence in his work, he proves to be trapped in the need to claim the Moroccanness of his music production.

This thesis has established that often some media and researchers have located the rappers' cultural capital and the idea of cultural resistance in the artists' positional value, that is, in their actions, rather than in their music production. Cultural capital is further bestowed when a rapper suffers direct oppression and incarceration by the state such as the case of rapper L7a9ed. However, rappers accumulate symbolic capital within the young audiences in their capacity to narrate their stories as well as the aesthetic value and creativity they show in this process. Such is the case of Muslim, Mobydick, Dizzy DROS and the early works of Don Bigg which focused on the urban marginalized and social inequities in the country. These stories include an Islamic ethos as intrinsically part of the Moroccan society. However, this study provides evidence to the fact that some secular groups in Morocco use rapper to present the meaning of cultural resistance as 'secular.' Some of these groups disregard any form of cultural and political activism deemed Islamist as the case of Muslim shows. Muslim's work analyzed in this thesis provides evidence that cultural resistance emerges also within Islamic and/or Islamist music production. The thesis also opens up space to challenge the construction of rap and resistance as secular within Morocco's activist groups and to consider Islamist, Islamic and/or conservative groups as equally valid to claim democracy and raise voices of dissent.

This thesis' use of interdisciplinary Cultural Studies methodologies enabled a multilayered and complex analysis of rap music that gives value to the untold stories

of urban youth's everyday lives drawing on sociological, political, historical and critical discourse analysis, resources and methods. Two years of intensive fieldwork and collection of first hand primary data including rap lyrics and songs, interviews with major stakeholders, artists, and other cultural actors have permitted the construction of a viable corpus for analysis. This thesis is therefore an important contribution to research on Moroccan rap, putting it in the context of Africa, MENA region and Arabic-speaking countries. It deconstructs the dominant image of young Muslim artists as angry and in constant turmoil and rap music in the MENA region and Africa as eminently a 'protest' culture. It also deconstructs the dominant approach to hip hop culture, which generally simplistically polarizes youth into rebellious vs. co-opted, without a deep analysis of the complexity of the field and its politics. In this sense, this study shows the many layers involved in acts of cultural resistance and the need to define the term locally, nationally and globally to unravel its complex meaning in each case.

This thesis demonstrates that rap music stands at the intersection of the social, political, economic, historical, geographical and aesthetics. It also provides evidence of the complex relationship of Moroccan rappers with their audiences; as well as state power and hip hop as a global cultural flow. In this regard it unveils the impossibility of unraveling the Moroccan rap scene without a deep knowledge of local and national specificities. This includes the use of language, the struggle for urban spaces, the role of economics in the field, and an understanding of the locality of culture and the complexity of the circulation of music, locally, nationally and globally. The original contribution of this thesis is to add to the scarce in-depth academic focus on Moroccan urban youth's cultural production, particularly rap

music. Moreover, this study provides evidence that young rappers are not blind to the politics of the Moroccan cultural field including political struggles within the nation, the processes of co-option, or the Eurocentric music market's pressures in respect to Moroccan artists. Moroccan rappers can thus choose to perpetuate, ignore, resist, or condemn these different aspects, each of which shape the field according to each artist's individual agenda.

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